

# MIKE SHAYNE

## MYSTERY MAGAZINE

WRITTEN IN BLOOD  
NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL  
by BRETT HALLIDAY

Plus:  
JOHNNY NINETY  
by DICK STODGHILL

THE  
CONFERENCE KILL  
by W. L.  
FIELDHOUSE

THE FOURTH  
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# MIKE SHAYNE

## MYSTERY MAGAZINE

OCT. 1979  
VOL. 43 NO. 10  
ISSN 0026-3621

### NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL: WRITTEN IN BLOOD

by BRETT HALLIDAY

*Shayne thought he knew where the missing manuscript was. He thought he knew who the murderer was. But he didn't know who had abducted Lucy — and that turned him into a raging tiger! . . . . . 4*

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MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, Vol. 43, No. 10, Oct. 1979. Published monthly by Renown Publications, Inc. P.O. Box 178, Reseda, CA 91335. Subscription, One Year (12 issues) \$12.00; Two Years (24 issues) \$20.00; Canada, One Year \$13.50; Two Years \$23.00; Foreign, One Year \$15.00; Two Years \$25.00 (U.S. Funds Only). Second class postage paid at Van Nuys, CA, and at additional mailing offices. Events and characters in this magazine are wholly fictitious. Copyright © 1979 by Renown Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American Conventions. Printed in the United States of America. Postmaster — return P.O. Box 178, Reseda, CA 91335.

# Written in Blood



By Brett Halliday

In this case, Mike Shayne wouldn't have minded letting the murderer get away with it. His big problem was that the killer had also abducted his lovely Lucy Hamilton!

THE WORDS ON the morning news cut into Shayne like a sharp knife as he drove to work on that particular Monday morning.

"Lucy Hamilton, secretary to a local private investigator, Michael Shayne, is being sought by the police as a witness. Perhaps the last person to see the murdered man alive..."

It was one of those moments when a man's private universe suddenly jolts him over the head with a club. Shayne swept his car to the curb and reached for the special telephone under the dashboard. Only for a split second, he considered the possibility that he'd heard wrong. But Mike Shayne's hearing was excellent and always had been. Likewise, there was only one

Michael Shayne, private investigator, in Miami and there was only one Lucy Hamilton.

Lucy was not only his complete office staff, she was his friend, his sometimes lover, his surrogate wife. Their closeness over the years had forged an unbreakable bond. He could not conceive of living in a Lucyless Miami. Nor could he conceive of the soft brown-haired woman with the soft Southern accent being involved in a murder.

The media sometimes got things wrong in their insane rush to be first with sensational news. He flipped the radio dial as he called the mobile operator. No other station at the moment had the item of which he had caught only the tail end. Lucy did not answer, either

at her apartment or at the office. There was nothing from the answering service, either.

He hung up. The next step was to call Will Gentry, Chief of Miami's police, and a long-time friend. Before he could place a call, his car phone rang. It was another long-time friend, Tim Rourke, reporter for the *Miami Daily News*.

"Mike, I just got —"

"What's this about Lucy?" Shayne snapped. "There was a flash on the news."

"Don't know yet, but I'm rolling for the story. Sounds like a pretty big one. Some retired diplomat has been shot in a villa near Bal Harbour. The cops got it only an hour or two ago. One of my sources says it's your Lucy all right. Positive identification. What the devil's going on?"

"I haven't the faintest, but I'm damned well going to find out. I haven't seen her since Friday. She had a special job she was doing —"

He told Rourke that Lucy had agreed to help a secretary friend translate a book manuscript written in Spanish. Lucy both spoke and understood the language. Because of this assignment, Shayne and Lucy had not seen each other over the weekend.

"That manuscript could be it, Mike. The dead diplomat just finished a tour in some South American country."

He gave Shayne the villa's address and hung up. Around Shayne, Miami's usual morning traffic worked its way through the usual snarls. Streets and sidewalks filled with the usual colorful brew of people, some rushing, some sauntering. To them, it was just another Monday morning. To Shayne, the morning already held a nightmare quality.

As he sped to the villa, he reviewed what he knew about Lucy's weekend translation job. She had told him about it Friday night before they closed the office.

"I met this secretary at a get-together of the Professional Women's Club," Lucy had told him. "The manuscript was originally dictated by a female member of a rich family in some South American country. Miss Browning typed it in Spanish when she was down there. Now it has to be translated into English to see if an American publisher wants it."

Sensing a special motive behind her interest in the project, he teased her until, blushing, she admitted what it was.

"Michael, you know I'm not overboard on Women's Lib, but I like to see my sex get ahead a little. The book was written by a woman, transcribed by a woman, and they plan to use a woman agent. Maybe they'll even take it to a woman publisher. So — why shouldn't

it be translated by a woman, also?"

Shayne laughed and warned Lucy that he expected her to switch her language back to English by Monday morning. Now this.

The car that followed Shayne was not the kind of car that would be used by someone wanting to be secretive. It looked like a Jaguar convertible in his rear-view mirror — an expensive one at that. It was occupied solely by a blond young woman, who appeared well-dressed and had an attractive face. He guessed she had been on his tail since he left his apartment. The radio news item had prevented him from spotting her sooner.

Shayne had been followed hundreds of times in his career and felt no fear, even though he knew the woman could be a stalking horse for a less obvious following car filled with more dangerous types. That ploy had also been used on him more than once. His concern about Lucy overrode anything else, so he continued to speed to the murder scene with only mild curiosity about the blonde in the following car. At any other time he might have enjoyed the game.

"Stay with me, lady," he muttered. "It looks like a long day — and it's much too early for fun and games."

By the time he reached the

villa, both Jaguar and blonde had dropped out of sight...

At the villa, there was the usual display of police cars, an ambulance, reporters' cars and a mobile TV unit. Shayne, well-known to the police, moved right inside, where he found his old friend Will Gentry in charge of things. The beefy Miami Chief of Police greeted Shayne with a quizzical expression.

"This one is really weird, Shayne. This one has got to blow your mind," Will said, scowling over his cigar.

"So blow my mind," grunted Shayne. "Start with Lucy. Where is she and what's going on?"

The police chief held up a brown purse. "Let's start with this. Recognize it?"

It was one of those stout, commodious bags women favored so much these days. It looked familiar to Shayne, and he had only to poke at the contents for a few seconds to know it was Lucy's.

"It's hers. Where is she?"

"Try down the hall and the first room on the left."

Shayne moved off and Will Gentry followed him at a leisurely pace. On the way the redhead passed the double doors of a large and elegant study with the sunlight streaming through bright windows. It was a cheerful room, decorated with flamingo designs, rich in light leather furniture and brass. It was



a masculine room denoting great comfort if not actual wealth. Police technicians crowded it, paying not the slightest bit of attention to the man who dominated it, as the dead always dominate the living.

The dead man was slim, well-dressed, and regarded Shayne with a polite, civilized look as if to say in a cool, gentlemanly manner: "What do you think of all this?"

A single small bullet hole marred the perfection of a high, intelligent-looking forehead. He sat behind his desk in a large swivel chair, so well balanced that that corpse did not slump. Shayne almost had to bite his tongue, not to speak to the corpse.

"Rogers Austin, a retired American consul," said a familiar voice near Shayne's ear. It was hulking Len Sturgis, Chief of Homicide Detectives, one of Gentry's best assistants. He was tall, middle-aged, wore a receding hairline and looked more than ordinarily worried.

"We've bought the book on this one," Sturgis said. "There's not only State Department interest but an important military type from a South American country —"

"Don't beat around the bush. It's Orovista," boomed Gentry, a few steps behind Shayne.

Shayne felt foreboding. Len Sturgis was here, Will Gentry himself was here, along with what

looked like half the Miami police department. Outside, there was already a confusion of reporters, trampling on the lawn, trying to get in. Tim Rourke would be out there, Shayne knew.

Inside, no one seemed to be in a hurry. Even Chief Gentry himself seemed subdued. Shayne had seen plenty of corpses and been in on many really big cases. The tension in the villa suggested that this one was right up there with the biggest. No doubt the D.A. himself would be around shortly.

Shayne tried to shake off the sinking feeling he felt inside and went on to the room Gentry had indicated. The guard moved aside at a nod from Will, who still followed, and Shayne swung into the room.

"Lucy, for God's sake —"

He stopped. The young woman he faced had brown hair and was immaculately dressed. She was attractive and had the unmistakable look of an executive secretary. She could easily have been Lucy Hamilton — but she was not.

"Who are you?" asked Shayne, brought up short.

Only the brown eyes, rapidly darting, showed that she was disturbed. The voice was cool, collected.

"Elvira Browning," she answered. "*Browning*. I don't have to say anything else until I see a lawyer."

Shayne looked at Gentry, then back to the woman. He had been so anxious to find Lucy that he needed a moment to recover.

"I'm Mike Shayne. Lucy Hamilton works for me. You must be the woman that brought her the manuscript to translate."

"Oh — Mr. Shayne." Elvira Browning appeared to relax. "I'm so glad you came. Would it be possible to talk to you — alone?"

Shayne looked at Gentry. Gentry told him that when the police answered a call from an anonymous source about a murder they had found Miss Browning in the villa with the corpse.

"So go ahead and talk," said Gentry. He left the room with a roll of his eyes at Shayne. It was an expression Gentry used when he wanted to indicate that there was a basket of worms to be looked into.

Elvira Browning was bright, cool and controlled, but Shayne detected high tension beneath the sleek exterior. She told Shayne she had worked for Rogers Austin on his last assignment in Orovista before he retired. He was friendly with an elderly woman in a wealthy Orovista family.

He had "lent" Elvira to the woman to transcribe her book. No one trusted local secretaries, and there was material in the book

that should not be revealed before publication. The original was sent to a printer in Orovista to be published. Rogers Austin had brought out a photocopy.

"The only copy, Mr. Shayne," Elvira added. "I made only two copies — the original and one copy. Austin had the copy."

He was to find an American publisher for his elderly friend. Back in the States, Miss Browning had gone to work for Austin once more — and had found Lucy to do the translating.

Shayne was not interested in details about the book. He wanted to know when she had last seen Lucy.

"She called me last night, Mr. Shayne. She said the text was too technical for her. It would require a professional translator. I told her I'd pick it up at your office this morning. She wanted to turn it over last night. So I told her to bring it here, to Rogers Austin. That's the last I heard from her. I couldn't see her — I had an important date."

Shayne did not miss the odd fact. "Why was it so important that Lucy get rid of it on Sunday night?"

"It could have been certain alien parties who wanted to get that copy. They might have bothered her. I warned her in the beginning there could be trouble, but your Lucy is very brave. It must be working with



you, Mr. Shayne. She thinks highly of you and hinted you've faced many dangerous situations together."

Shayne wanted an hour with the woman, but only got ten minutes.

"Look, Mike," said Gentry when he pulled Shayne from the room, "I've got a local man from the U.S. Department of State, some high security type from Orovista and the D.A. all burning up the wires over this crazy manuscript some old lady wrote in a foreign country.

"I've got a problem murder of an important Miami citizen. I know your Lucy wouldn't do anything wrong. The best thing you can do for me is find her — and *find that stinking manuscript*. Because of your secretary's involvement, I'll let you see Browning's statement and talk to her later. Now isn't the time."

"This Browning is too sincere, Will."

"Don't I *know* it! She claims she didn't see a thing — just walked in on the dead man this morning, and panicked when the cops showed. She isn't the panic type. *I'm* the one who should panic. I've got seven — or seventy thousand — suspects on this crime in two nations. It might be one of those Mondays."

"It already is, Will, it already is." Mike Shayne spoke grimly.

## II

TIM ROURKE WAS somewhere

in the boil of reporters but Shayne didn't try to find him. Instead, he went directly to the Buick, which he had parked well away from the growing confusion around the villa. His mind was on Lucy and the disturbing fact that her purse had been left where a murder had been committed.

Had she arrived last night before the murder? Or this morning after the murder? And where had she gone? Most of all — why hadn't she called him? If there was trouble about the manuscript, it was inconceivable that she should have tried to handle it on her own.

A tall, powerfully built man awaited him at the car.

"Senor Shayne, I would like to ride with you for a few blocks," he said. He had a squarish face. It wore a steely look, an important look, a commanding look.

"Is there a reason?"

"Si — yes. I am Colonel Sarza, of the Orovista National Constabulary."

Shayne shrugged and let the self-styled Colonel in the car. His mind was still on Lucy. He wanted to check the office and her apartment. There were friends to call...

"It seems that your country has an important document belonging to my country," said Colonel Sarza. He smelled

sharply of ginger cologne. Shayne had a flash of South American palaces, formal military dress, state dinners with silverware gleaming...

"I hear it was the private memoirs of an elderly lady," said Shayne.

"They were illegally brought out of our country in an American diplomatic pouch."

Shayne looked in his rear-view mirror. The blond woman in the Jaguar had picked up his tail again. Busy, busy.

"Then you should speak to the State Department. Or possibly Will Gentry, our Chief of Police, back at the villa, Colonel."

"I skip all that. I want the manuscript, Senor Shayne."

A revolver had suddenly appeared in the hands of the Colonel. Shayne's own gun was secure in his glove compartment, beyond reach at the moment. It was his own fault for concentrating so hard on Lucy — plus the fact that he had not expected a high foreign official to enter his relatively modest Buick and pull a gun on him. Thoughtfully, he scraped his thumb along his jawline, ironically amused at how rapidly this Monday had brought disaster into his life. Lucy involved in a murder — Lucy missing — and now some banana republic military type threatening to shoot him.

"That is not a polite way to ask, Sarza," he said evenly.

"We will go to your office — to your apartment, if necessary. We will obtain Mrs. Ybarra's manuscript, Shayne. I know you have it."

"The old woman must've written quite a story."

Shayne bought time, looking at the man's feet. They were braced. A sudden swerve wouldn't catch him off balance.

"The head of the Ybarra family in Orovista was killed by terrorists. The foolish old woman blamed it on the government instead... on President Barranca."

"I understand the book is being published down there anyway. If —"

"You understand wrong, Senor Shayne."

The woman was close behind, still following, still alone. She might be with Sarza, she might not. At least she didn't hold a gun on him. Shayne was annoyed. He hadn't taken orders from a colonel since his military service days. He pointed the car toward the curb and took his hands off the steering wheel.

In a smooth, liquid motion so swift that Sarza had no time to react, Shayne was out of the Buick, spinning... a flash of pavement... a jolt as he landed on his hands and feet like a big cat... a couple of long-legged strides and he was over the hood of the convertible Jaguar and folding his big body into the seat next to the blonde.

They watched in silence as Sarza reacted. It was as Shayne was sure it would be. Self-preservation took over for the Colonel. He seized the vacated steering wheel and fought the car to the curb. He was cursing as he did so.

"Slow reactions," Shayne told the young woman. "He's been away from the active life a bit long."

She had given Shayne a startled look. Now she laughed.

"He can't steer your Buick gracefully with a gun in one hand."

"Still, he parked it nicely without scratching it."

She had eased to the curb behind Shayne's car. The Colonel got out of the Buick, his face red. He glared at them. His gun had disappeared. He strode over to the Jaguar.

"Shayne, you have made a mistake."

Shayne unfolded ominously from the convertible. He stood teetering on the balls of his feet before Sarza.

"You pulled a gun on me, friend. That usually gets a broken jaw. When your jaw's broken, they have to wire it and for weeks you get your food through a straw. You don't sleep well nights, either."

"Come on, Sarza," said the blonde. "Give it up. I told you I could deal with Mr. Shayne. I told you he wouldn't scare."

"I'll take the Jaguar," said Sarza. "Shayne, play it smart. Listen to Olga."

Somewhat to Shayne's surprise, the girl got out of the Jag and turned it over to the Colonel.

"I take it you're going with me," Shayne said to her.

"If I'm invited."

Shayne looked at the pretty girl and the dour colonel. "Given a choice, can there be any doubt?"

Sarza colored, started to say something, then looked away and gunned the motor. He disappeared with a roar down the street. But Olga stood there frowning, staring after him.

"It doesn't fit. He shouldn't have done that. Not at all. It doesn't fit. Why did he do it?"

"Nothing about that man interests me," said Shayne. "Olga — I think I heard the name right — you'll have to make it fast. I assume you know who I am. I've got a missing secretary, and a few other things to do, so —"

"You are Michael Shayne, local private detective, Miami. I am Olga Petersen, international private detective, of St. Moritz, Paris, London, New York, Tokyo — and lately Orovista. I have come to Miami to collaborate with you. I motored down from Palm Beach yesterday. If you will join me at a late breakfast I can tell you many things which might even help you solve your secretary problem. I hope those statements appeal

to you more than a gun in the stomach."

"Somehow they do. Furthermore, you haven't overused after-shave lotion."

They both laughed and got into Shayne's waiting Buick...

Shayne headed for one of his favorite restaurants, the Golden Cock on Biscayne Boulevard. It was after eleven o'clock and, with the crowded morning and the company he had, it made sense to indulge a little.

Before Shayne settled down to explore this new phenomenon of an international private detective, he called his office once more. Until he knew something about Lucy, it was going to be hard to concentrate on others. This time there was a message that the answering service had overlooked earlier.

"Michael — Don't worry about me on Monday. But if I'm late, call the rug cleaner to change his appointment till later in the week."

That reassured him. She didn't sound desperate and she had expected to be late on Monday. He could give her the rest of the afternoon before he really worried. He went back to the table.

Miss Olga Petersen, international private detective, could just as well have been an international model or movie star. She had an exquisite face, the Scandinavian sort of beauty

with the delicate cheek hollows and planes of flesh that pleased photographers — and people who liked to look at lovely women.

Her figure was also outstanding. She was well-endowed up above and beyond question equally attractive in hip, thigh, and leg. Her clothes were a blend of Paris and Palm Beach with mod Italian accessories. If there was a brain to go with all of this, she'd do well, thought Shayne, using her beauty to dazzle while she collected the facts.

Style was the essence of the woman. She wore a yellow open-necked jacket and matching pants which, she told Shayne, was slub-textured polyester fabric, straw-colored, over a white filigreed blouse — featured in fashion magazines just reaching the stands, she assured him. Her table-manners and leisurely conversation spoke of the jet-set, the well-to-do, among whom clothes, food and conversation required excellence.

She explained that there were many interesting jobs to be had among the wealthy who traveled the world, from ski resorts in Switzerland to Christmas in Tahiti and summers in Chile. It was a nervous world, filled with its own sets of problems, nothing very heavy.

"Such as your work, Mr. Shayne, which I've heard about and admire very much. Nothing

like that ugly murder this morning. I do just a woman's sort of thing. Still, it is better than being a rich man's wife, mistress or whore."

Shayne had to smile at her silken smoothness, flattering him while she built her own image so skillfully.

She told him that her client was the President-General of Orovista himself, the same Barranca that Colonel Sarza worked for. The manuscript of the wealthy older woman, Estrelita Ybarra, had caused him much embarrassment.

Shayne told her he knew about the murder of the Ybarra family head. The press blamed the terrorists. The book blamed Barranca himself.

"It is possible," Olga said, frowning. "Barranca did not allow the book to be published. He seized the original manuscript, arrested the printer in Orovista, destroyed the plates and all printed copy — even, unfortunately, executed the book's editor."

"Now he wants the final photocopy that Rogers Austin brought out in the diplomatic pouch."

"Now he wants the copy."

"I don't think much of your client."

"You might change your mind when you hear the rest of the story."

"Come on, Olga," Shayne said. "You know there have to be a dozen pirated copies of that book

floating around in Orovista. I can't imagine the peasants, the common people, being shocked out of their skulls by the death of one rich man, either by terrorists or Barranca."

"Yes, there are pirated copies in that country. Still, Barranca wants this final copy and has paid me to help get it. So I flew to Palm Beach, where I have friends — and learned about you. Since I am merely international and don't know your country too well, it makes sense that I would try to team with the local most powerful private agent. There is a fee to be shared."

Shayne smiled.

"Olga, I like you. I'm enjoying my very first contact with a truly international private detective — those gold-embossed cards of yours are impressive — but I don't want to work for the President-General of Orovista."

He then questioned her about the murder. She told him she doubted that it was Sarza, despite the Colonel's heavy-handed ways. Rogers Austin was a channel to the manuscript that Sarza sought officially, just as she sought it unofficially. It could be the *Reformistas*; however. There was a group of exiled revolutionaries in Miami who would kill to get the manuscript. A man named Chaldron had been mentioned.

"You see, Mr. Shayne, there are elections coming up in Orovista in about six months. That

book could hurt Barranca and help the *Reformistas*."

Shayne nodded. He knew full well that Miami had become the refugee capital for the entire Southern Hemisphere. There were splinter groups, parties, gangs, and individuals, outcast from their home governments, spinning plots daily in the humid Florida air.

"Have you got the manuscript, Mr. Shayne? Can I get it from you?"

"Nobody is sure where the book is," he replied carefully. "It seems to me it belongs to the woman who wrote it, this Mrs. Ybarra. I'd give it to her if I had it in hand."

Blue eyes stared at Shayne through slightly lowered lids. Olga was not stupid. She had easily caught his nuance. Shayne was pretty sure where the book was — but not positive.

"Then let's go see Mrs. Ybarra," said Olga with sudden, businesslike efficiency...

The manuscript was, of course, under the rug in Shayne's office. No doubt Lucy, in hiding it, had distributed the six hundred pages well so that no bumps showed. That had to be the import of her message about the rug-cleaning, because they had not scheduled any rug-cleaning this month.

### III

ON THE WAY OUT of the Golden

Cock Shayne had to stop for a phone call from Tim Rourke, who had traced him there.

"We're not getting much on this end about the murder," Rourke told him. "Gentry took the Browning woman downtown, but I don't think they have anything much on her. Maybe they'll charge her with stealing Lucy's purse. Austin has been dead since last night, and la belle Browning had a heavy-sugar date and was out in public where other witnesses saw her."

He went on to add that the weird part of the story was the local State Department man. That individual was more worried about angering Barranca than about the death of one of his colleagues. The U.S. did not want the friendly dictator upset and was unhappy with Rogers Austin for using the diplomatic pouch to bring the manuscript out of Orovista.

"I like Sarza for the murder," said Shayne bluntly. "He has no apparent motive. But I suspect wheels within wheels."

"Then you'll have to tussle with Gentry. He's too smart to tip the press, but we all know they're looking for a guy named Chaldron, who's the local head of the Orovista *Reformistas*."

Shayne gave Tim what he could. As was the case often with Gentry, he had to balance friendship against professional interests. One of the skills of being a private



detective lay in knowing how much to say and when.

Olga had preceded Shayne out of the restaurant. As he came out into the sunlight a man walked past him, carrying some clothes. They were straw-colored and Shayne recognized the material with the odd name of slub-textured. It looked like the suit that had so well displayed the charms of his international private detective.

"Can't be," Shayne told himself. But of course there wouldn't be many women in Miami who had such a suit yet. "Hey, you!" Shayne called to the man.

The latter had the dark face of a Latin. He took one look at Shayne and burst into a run, racing up the street with a sprinter's agility.

Shayne could have caught the man, but he was more concerned with what had happened to Olga. His car was parked in the far reaches of the lot, a location he must have chosen deliberately. Shayne sprinted in the opposite direction for his Buick.

He had chosen well. Two muscled Latinos had Olga between them and were roughing her up. The woman was good. Her mouth drew back in a rictus of anger and she fought with a combination of karate and French-style foot-boxing that kept her assailants from pinning her down. She was lithe, agile,

well-muscled for a woman. She was also practically naked at this point, stripped down to her panties and bra. It was a beautiful sight to see.

Shayne moved in quickly and slammed one of her attackers against a car so hard that bones crunched and the man screamed. He reached for the other, but dark eyes took in Shayne's bulk and his cold look and the second man gave up. He shoved the near-nude Olga into Shayne's arms and took off. The first man Shayne had attacked limped away after him, moaning.

Shayne had to dance for precious seconds with the warm body of Olga in his arms, not wanting her to fall to the blacktop in her undressed condition. By the time he had eased her into the Buick, a car roared out of the back entrance of the parking lot with the two men in it. They had apparently left the motor running.

Shayne looked around in surprise. You would think that no red-blooded male would stand by while a lovely young girl was being stripped and humiliated. The answer was simple. There were no witnesses. Up front, the noon crowd had descended in force and the lot boys, with heads down, were spinning cars into place with dedicated concentration. The people were all self-absorbed, going into the restaurant. Shayne, Olga and her assailants might just as well

have been on a deserted street at midnight.

"Who is it?" Shayne asked the panting girl. "Sarza again?"

Olga shook her head. "It has to be the *Reformistas*. I recognized one of them. Ahh . . . I am so winded."

Shayne slid off his jacket. "You did very well, Olga. You can handle yourself. But why did they want to take your clothes?"

She now became aware of her condition and he saw a pretty blush extend from her shoulders to her forehead. She took his jacket gratefully and draped her torso. Shayne tried to hold his pulse down at the unescapable sight of sleek golden flesh adorning a beautiful figure.

"Kidnapping, Orovista style. Take away the clothes first. Person doesn't try so hard to escape. Also, a psychological advantage to be dressed while the enemy is naked. Crude and primitive, Mr. Shayne. They wanted me."

Shayne drove her to her expensive hotel in Miami Beach. All the way there, she kept shaking her head and muttering. She seemed badly shaken and subdued in an odd sort of way he hadn't expected. She had picked up a couple of minor bruises, but he could tell that it was not the physical exertion that bothered her. He made a mental note of that.

They caused a minor sensation in crossing the lobby to the elevators. It wasn't so much the bare skin — there was a lot of that around any beach-front hotel. It was the cream-gold quality of the flesh Olga displayed. There was also a surprising moment in her room. She brushed against him and then looked up at him startled. He himself was caught off guard. Their touching had been electric.

"I'll shower and change," she said quickly.

"Yes," said Shayne thoughtfully. "We'd better move right along."

THE PRESIDENT'S YACHT rode majestically on the sun-dappled sea. There were a number of yachts in the harbor, but the one from Orovista looked to Shayne as big as a destroyer. It was white, gold and red — a beautiful vessel from any angle.

"Barranca lives well," Shayne remarked as he and Olga moved to the dock.

"Still, it's a prison for Mrs. Ybarra," said Olga.

The yacht was not at the dock but anchored well out in the harbor. Olga told Shayne these were Sarza's instructions.

"Mrs. Ybarra is not allowed to land — not in this country or in any other nation. France, England, Africa — you name it. Nor may she land in Orovista —

until her manuscript has been given to Barranca."

"A woman without a country," mused Shayne. "There's a famous legend in this country, a story called *The Man Without a Country*. He was supposed to have hated America and was not allowed to land here or in any port. When he died, they found he had preserved a mountain of memos, proving that he really loved his country after all."

"The same with the old lady, I think," said Olga. "She has family in Orovista — children and grandchildren. Yet she cannot return until this matter is settled. It is most unfortunate."

"It grows," nodded Shayne. "Other exiles without countries, in Asia and elsewhere. They don't have yacht privileges." He still did not feel involved with the problems of Orovista, or Barranca or Mrs. Ybarra. Unlike most cases, he'd been dragged into this one backward, and so he had to go on, however reluctantly...

Mrs. Ybarra did, however, impress him. She was in her sixties, a handsome woman, straight and proud, who must once have been a great beauty. Soft, dark eyes brimmed over with intelligence and compassion. He met her in the great salon of the yacht, with Colonel Sarza and some of his uniformed staff standing at attention, as if Shayne

were a visitor of state, ushered into the presence of a queen. Even Sarza seemed attenuated in her presence. She sat in regal ease on a small sofa while Shayne and Olga sat facing her and a delicious wine was served.

Estrelita Ybarra spoke frankly, ignoring Sarza and his men, who hovered in the background.

"I wrote my book as a matter of conscience, Mr. Shayne. The world knows of the evils of unbridled power, yet each of us must challenge the evil he sees, even when the story is an old one. I was once a part of the gaiety, the gambling, the sex — even the drugs — in parties of the rich and the powerful in my nation. I made my mark and had my years and did not then see the decadence."

"Perhaps your book *should* be published," said Shayne.

"I fear too many have died. First there was the head of our family. He merely wanted to give up some of our large holdings to help the poor, but he was called 'senile' and then murdered. Then the two killers themselves died, the supposed terrorists. Six more are in jail all this time later, never tried, for planning it. I tell you it was the family and Barranca that planned it."

The old woman spoke English with an accent that Shayne hardly noticed. It was her intensity that came through. She leaned forward to tap his knee with her

fan. The fan seemed as much a part of her as her features. It was hardly needed in the air-conditioned salon.

"Next, my editor dies and I do not understand that. So innocent! Now I hear that even my good friend, Rogers Austin, is dead — murdered because of my book. No, Mr. Shayne, my story is real but with the election, with the blood it has caused, it is not to be published. I wish it back. Will you help me?"

"Will you work as my agent as Olga works for Barranca? There is no longer a conflict between myself, Barranca and the family. We all wish it back, not to be published. Some day it will be published as important history. It helps no one now. I wish to spend my remaining years in my native land, at peace, enjoying my children and grandchildren."

Shayne could not help being impressed by the elderly lady. "You wrote it," he said. "You have a right to publish it or not." He looked at Sarza, now resplendent in his military outfit. "That cannot be decided for you by men in military uniforms, or even national presidents. But it's your decision. I will do what I can to help."

He had little choice, it seemed. Lucy was involved. Gentry was involved and, no doubt, the State Department would be relieved to see the book handed back to

Barranca. It was a job for the C.I.A., of course; but Olga had explained that.

"They told Barranca no, Mike," she had told him. "Your press has given them too much bad publicity about interfering in the affairs of other nations — especially when it involves a private citizen and his government."

*Donna Estrelita* thanked the detective.

"Perhaps you will return for dinner tonight, Mr. Shayne," she added. "This is a beautiful ship and your harbor is lovely, too. You are a man of perception and intelligence, and I would enjoy your company."

Before Shayne could answer, Sarza stepped forward: "No, *Donna Ybarra*. That is impossible."

The old lady's eyes flashed. "Colonel, I may have aboard such guests as I choose."

The Colonel rode her down. "I am the ranking officer in charge of the vessel and its occupants and possible guests. I do not approve."

"*Sarza!*" cried Olga in astonishment. "You overstep your bounds."

The Colonel's eyes gleamed with enjoyment at the humiliation he had caused the old lady. She had blushed — so had Olga.

"In the matter of the book recovery, Barranca has given me a completely free hand, and I

want Shayne out earning his money, not lolling about on the yacht."

Even the faces of the aides seemed to blanch at Sarza's crudity. Shayne rose slowly.

"I could not accept anyway, Sarza. You would be there, and I don't eat with pigs."

Sarza blushed and uttered an oath. The *Donna* smiled, Olga's eyes gleamed and even the aides displayed dancing eyes. The party broke up with Olga following Mrs. Ybarra as she retired to her private quarters, asking Shayne to wait for her. Shayne decided that the young woman was close to the *Donna*. He liked Olga the more for it.

Colonel Sarza seemed to recover quickly from the insult from Shayne. "Come on, Shayne, I'll give you a tour of the boat," he said airily when the ladies withdrew.

Shayne would have preferred to refuse, but he had long ago learned not to let personal feelings interfere with an investigation. He sensed right away that touring the boat was not what Sarza had in mind. He was right.

Sarza rushed him through a couple of fancy cabins and a quick glimpse of the engine room in jig time, followed by the four aides, who practically had to run to keep up. They ended up on the lower deck, just over the place where the motor taxi that had brought Shayne and Olga to

the vessel was moored.

Sarza leaned on the rail speaking in a low, confidential tone to Shayne.

"Uh — Shayne, you don't expect much from that blond detective bitch, I hope. There's nothing there but looks."

"It isn't up to me to expect anything of her, Sarza. Your boss, Barranca, hired her, not me."

"That's what I mean. All this waste of hiring detectives and running about your city. It comes down to this — you've got the book and we want it. You and I — we can solve the whole thing in ten minutes."

"How's that, Sarza?"

"Come on, Shayne. Your secretary got that book from the Browning woman, another loser. You were smart enough to see big pesos involved. Chaldrón and the *Reformistas*, they'll pay. So you hide the secretary, hide the book and look for a deal."

"Is that what I'm doing?" asked Shayne mildly.

"I don't blame you. The stupid old lady made a big mistake, writing all those things. She had her fun and games in her day, and then gets religion when she's tired of it all. Who cares about that?"

"What did you want to tell me, Sarza?"

"Forget the *Reformistas*. They haven't got the money.

Strike the old lady for plenty, her family's very rich. Get it that way, maybe five or ten thousand. I'll put a little more in the pot. What your country calls 'gravy', my friend?"

He pulled out a small roll of bills and stuffed it in Shayne's coat pocket.

"Here's an extra thousand, and what they say in your country, that will get you an extra shoe-shine, *verdad?* Get that book on board here to me by midnight. Then you confuse the old lady for a few days and pick up her fee. *Bueno?*"

He had a wide false grin on his face, as if dealing with a waiter he didn't dare order about. Shayne felt the disgust right down to his toes at the incredible condescension of the man, the talking down.

"Sarza, look out over the water. What do you see?"

"Your city, Shayne. A great city." Sarza shaded his eyes and looked out across the afternoon waters, apparently eager to please.

"And down there, Sarza?"

"Water, clean water."

"Lean way over. What do you see?"

"Only my face, Shayne."

"Good," said Shayne. "The question now is, can the unclean pig you see swim in the clean water?"

With one smooth motion he upended the Colonel and dumped

him, uniform and all, into the bay. Sarza went down with a yell and a splash. Shayne pulled back, ready for the attack of the four aides, still lined up behind them.

One aide said, "The Colonel is overboard. We must rescue him." His feet drummed on the deck but he did not move.

"It is essential to obtain a life jacket!" cried a second. He pounded on the deck, but did not move.

"There is distress caused by the Englishman," agreed a third. He waved his fists in the air, without moving anywhere near Shayne.

"We are speeding to your helpless rescue!" cried the fourth. "You must manage the water until it recedes." He pantomimed a rope.

Down below, to Sarza, it must have sounded as if his staff was rushing about in great activity to help him. But the aides stood there, eyes gleaming. Shayne's eyes gleamed, too. Naval cadets of Orovista, no doubt, and not fond of Colonel Sarza. He took the money Sarza had stuffed in his pocket and handed it to the nearest one.

"Better pull him out sometime before sundown." Shayne chuckled and went on to the water taxi. Fortunately, Olga appeared before the spluttering Sarza was finally pulled out of the water by the seemingly overanxious naval cadets, who tripped all



over each other. Twice, Sarza accidentally went back into the water.

"Why are you laughing, Shayne?" asked Olga as they sped back to the beach.

Shayne told her, and her healthy laughter pealed forth across the water.

#### IV

LATER, IN OLGA'S hotel suite, Shayne slumped in an easy chair glowering and nursing a Martell. The thumb that scraped along the red stubble of his beard was in ceaseless motion on this late Monday afternoon.

"It stinks," he said as if he had a bad taste in his mouth. "It's all backwards and wrong."

"Lay it out for me, Mike."

The girl stretched out along a sofa across from him, a delicious sight in silken lounging pajamas. But Shayne had his mind on other things.

"Why does Barranca want that photocopy of the book so badly, Olga? There's bound to be a couple of dozen pirated copies running around his country. Scandals of the rich? Every country has them. Why kill that editor? That really intrigues me. Who would kill the Consul? Everybody would gain by his staying alive, even the *Reformistas*."

"Maybe Barranca wants to show his power over the Ybarra family."

"There are better ways. But look at Sarza, acting like a comic-opera clown of a Colonel. A high official of a large country pulling a gun on me? Insulting an old lady? Offering me a peanut bribe? He's much too sharp for that. He's overplaying the crude military type — he isn't."

"And me, Mike? Am I also something weird?"

"Oh, no, Olga. The whole business is sick underneath. The manuscript is for real. Donna and her agony is for real. Barranca really wants that book and he knows you're smart and for real."

"It's tragic, Mike."

"Tragic — and — dangerous. But we haven't spotted the real game yet. The key has to be something between Sarza and — maybe — the *Reformistas*. I wonder..."

"Mike, we'll work better if we take a little time off, maybe have a nice dinner on my expense account and do a few places. I'm dying to get to know Miami and Miami Beach. Tomorrow we can dig in again."

"Sorry, Olga. International private detectives can afford to be leisurely. Local types hit the pavement and grub it through. Get your beauty sleep — I'll see you tomorrow."

He left a disappointed blond beauty, who evidently had her heart set on a carefree night on the town.

Shayne's first job was to secure the manuscript. He hurried to his office, full of foreboding. By all rights, the place should be ripped apart by desperate searchers. But when he checked in, everything was silent and still, everything was in place as it should be.

As Lucy's message to him had indicated, the manuscript was under the rug in his office, divided into neat piles so as not to attract notice. He collected it all carefully and it seemed heavy in his hands. A lot of people had died because of these typed pages of an old woman's memoirs. Written in blood.

He hid it in the leather telephone book cover, binding the pages in and then carelessly tossing it on Lucy's desk. The old purloined letter idea, hiding it practically in plain sight. Nobody was killing himself to search for it anyway, another bleak question to add to the others. Why not?

He checked his own apartment, then Lucy's. There was no sign of her. There were no further messages at the answering service. He felt uneasy now. It looked like a sure bet somebody had grabbed Lucy. That would explain the lack of a search for the book — anyone who knew him knew he would trade the book for her life in a second.

Put in that light, Shayne now suspected that Lucy had never

been near the villa of Rogers Austin. More probably, something had frightened her over the weekend, so that she hid the book and came looking for Shayne. She was intercepted before she could reach him. Then Miss Browning took her purse to the villa — almost as if she wanted to be caught there with the dead body and the purse.

How did that shape up as a crazy angle? Barranca, Mrs. Ybarra, the consul; Olga, Shayne and Lucy.

Shayne called Tim Rourke, who did have one tidbit. Miss Browning had been released by the police. She had worked for the consul in Orovista and here in Miami for a month since he retired. It was a perfect office relationship — no trace of scandal. Austin was a thoroughly proper widower and could have had an affair or married the young woman, had both chosen, without scandal. He had no family to speak of and only comfortable assets, not enough to be murdered over.

"It comes down to the book, old buddy," said Tim. "And Browning didn't need to wax Austin to get her hands on it. She had it in her hands every day."

Shayne wanted to know how Gentry and his police were moving on the case. Tim told him the Police Chief was going to move

real slowly on this one. Washington and Orovista were on his neck.

After that, Shayne checked Miss Browning's apartment, a modest place not far from his own in central Miami. She lived alone, she wasn't home, and there were no neighbors or janitors to give information.

Shayne drew a deep breath. It was slogging time again, the real bare bones of his profession, out on the street, digging among the ordinary people. It was past the time for villas, fancy luncheons, yachts and attractive women with time on their hands.

The *Reformistas*, particularly the shadow name of *Chaldron* that had showed up in the case. They were the other side of his equation, the shadow world of the poor exiles, and he had a hunch that the link was going to be a cool but tense brown-haired young woman who had taken Lucy's purse to the scene of the Murder — Miss Elvira Browning, taking him back where the case had begun . . .

Shayne knew people to talk to, street-wise people hooked to the grapevine, people who made it a point to know what went on in the exile communities. The secret was to move as on a checkerboard, a step at a time. Visits, calls, time, even a little money, had to be wasted on dead ends. Deep patience was required. The right questions

had to be asked. It was better to look for a thing than a person, because exiled leaders had a great fear of counter-agents.

Shayne spread the word that he was looking for a pirated copy of *Donna Ybarra's* memoirs, probably a barely legible Xerox. Most of his informants didn't know what he was talking about, but they automatically passed him along to fringe figures and finally actual members, though low-ranked, of the *Reformista* movement of Orovista.

Drink a cup of coffee, or a beer, talk to a man in a bar or coffee shop. Pass out a small bill. Make a phone call. Get back in the Buick and travel to the next stop. Working in this fashion and stolidly ignoring the disappointments, he reached the Cafe Espirito in four hours.

As soon as he entered the place he knew that he had finally reached a hangout, perhaps *the* main hangout, of the *Reformistas*. It had that unmistakable air of importance, like a celebrity lounge in the American world, a sense of important people nearby, of important events happening just offstage.

There were a large dance floor and two colorful jukeboxes, flashing oranges, reds, purples, and greens. There was a bar toward the rear, dark enough to conceal faces. There was a restaurant well-lighted enough to give the place a legitimate

look. There was Valdes, a fat man with almost no hair and merry dark eyes.

"Do you think I can find a copy of the book I seek?" Shayne asked.

"Why would such as yourself want such a book?" Valdes countered. "In America you sell openly scandal books that we pass about secretly. There are copies of the Ybarra book taken from the printshop before the plates were destroyed. It is not so much."

"I happen to have been in Orovista," said Shayne. "I happen to have bought some interesting pictures. Combined with the pirated text I would have something to make money with."

"I see . . ." The man studied Shayne for a long moment. "You would want to talk to Chaldron then."

"I have heard his name. If anyone should have such a book almost certainly, it would be he," said Shayne.

Valdes stretched and yawned. He indicated the dance floor, which was filling with young couples turning on to some fast Latin rhythms from one of the jukeboxes. A happy babble came from the bar. There was another beehive of sound from the restaurant area.

"It is dull to talk about books, *Senor* Shayne, when there is so much life about one. Pretty

young women to dance and drink with. Interesting people to talk to about Orovista."

"It is that which bothers me," said Shayne, aping the lingual formality of Valdes.

"Can this be a serious revolutionary movement? The *Reformistas* I see look happy, well-dressed, well-fed. Perhaps it is more pleasant to dance and eat and drink in a safe place like this than to fight in the dark streets of the capital or live on rice and beans in the jungle."

Valdes colored and gestured to a waiter. "Take this man to see Chaldron," he said.

Shayne followed the man down a dark passage at the rear of the establishment. He pressed his elbow against his gun, heavy on his hip, reassuring. He would be frisked, of course, but this time he would not give up . . .

He was not frisked. He was led into a small room with a plain desk, where a thin man with a Latin face and a grim line for a mouth sat staring at him. The man wore dark glasses even in the dimness of the room. Finally — the fruits of a long, sweating search.

Shayne stood with his back to the wall, watching both the door and the man at the desk after the waiter left.

Without a word, Chaldron opened a drawer and dropped the heavy mass of a Xerox document on the desktop. His manner

was almost contemptuous.

"How much?" asked Shayne.

"Two hundred, two thousand, a nickel," said the man, curling his thin lips. His desk drawer was still open and he went for a gun inside. Shayne moved almost as fast for his weapon. Seeing he was covered, Chaldron laid his revolver down carefully.

"I suggest you rise," said Shayne.

"You don't want the book," said the man. "You don't read Spanish. You have not been in Orovista."

"I want —"

The door burst open and two burly figures rushed inside. Shayne covered them, reaching for Chaldron's revolver. A window behind the desk slid quickly open and Shayne was covered by another man standing in the alley. It was perfectly orchestrated. Two men Shayne could cover. Three, no.

"The detective is leaving," said Chaldron.

Shayne glared at the thin man. Suddenly he laughed and put away his gun. He went to the door. When he turned back, the man at the desk smiled at him proudly and twiddled his fingers almost with affection.

"You were very good," said Shayne.

"Thank you," said the man.

Moments later, Shayne found himself alone in the dark alley. He walked slowly back to his

Buick, shaking his head. Valdes lolled against his car, and he had a camera or a similar object hanging by a leather strap from his shoulder.

"Shall we talk in the car, Chaldron?" Shayne asked Valdes.

"It is okay," said the fat man, his eyes twinkling.

Inside the car, they sat side by side and Shayne said, "Your boy looked very much the tough, disciplined leader. It was a good test of me."

"Pepe would like to be an actor. He often stands in for me, while I play cafe manager. This one was hard for him. Your reputation as tough and fast with a gun is not to be easily ignored."

"Brains count for more," said Shayne. "I wouldn't have shot him. Tell me about Lucy."

They sat in the car, and Valdes-Chaldron, or Chaldron as Shayne now knew him to be, unslung the black leather unit, which turned out to be a recorder, not a camera. It was battery-operated. Chaldron flicked it on.

"I'm sorry, Michael," said Lucy's voice. "I seem to have gotten myself in a pickle with some revolutionaries. I guess you know about all of that now. You're not to worry, because they've treated me very well. I guess they thought I had the Ybarra manuscript on me, but I had a telephone book instead. So they want the manuscript before they let me go. I'm sorry

I got us into this trouble, Michael."

Shayne had to bite down on his teeth. He felt an inner rage to kill Chaldron or anybody else responsible for taking Lucy. He could tolerate being beat up or shot at himself much better than having her threatened. But this time he had to play it Chaldron's way. Nor could he fault himself — they had jumped on his poor secretary even before she knew there was the slightest bit of danger. It was almost as if they had been set up. . . .

"Your apartment around midnight, Shayne," said Chaldron. "We want to hold the secretary another twelve hours while we get the manuscript out of the country and back to Orovista to our people."

"No way, Chaldron. Even trade — at midnight."

"Sorry Shayne. You have a bad reputation — or maybe it is a good one. It is said you are a panther with long claws and incredible quickness. Once you have back this secretary of whom you are fond, you might also grab the manuscript and leave some slit throats besides."

Shayne found himself speaking in the same South American politeness.

"It is pleasant to be respected, Chaldron. There are things beyond compromise. No Lucy, no manuscript."

"It is only twelve short hours."

Shayne did not reply. He knew the man would give in. It was a feeling one got after years of experience with people like this, like watching a man's eyes to see if he would risk a jump at you or not, in a confrontation.

## V

CHALDRON CONTINUED to argue in a soft, pleasant voice. Shayne yawned. Part of it was to cover his surprise, because a Jaguar convertible slid along the street and the single woman driving was quite visible in the streetlights.

Dark hair, dark glasses — but the body belonged to Olga, the international private detective, and her wig and glasses would fool practically nobody. Chaldron also saw the car and the girl but his voice did not change, nor did his expression.

So — the lovely Olga also understood that detectives had to work at night.

Chaldron broke off his argument. "It's all right, Shayne. The detective woman, Olga Petersen, is one of ours. She is merely here at the cafe to see some old friends from Orovista."

"Olga — a *Reformista*?" said Shayne. "But she works for Barranca."

"True. How do you say it — she is a double agent."

"Sarza knows this?"

"Sarza is a very dangerous man. Like many men of harsh-



ness, he does not know all that he should know. People do not confide in such."

"And Barranca only knows what Sarza knows?"

"That is accurate . . . Shayne, I will agree to your proposition. The manuscript for your Lucy Hamilton. We had best make the exchange at your apartment at two a.m. as it is now past ten, and midnight would be too soon."

Shayne shrugged. "It will do."

His mind had already spun on to new vistas. At last, he understood why there was so much fuss about a simple transaction. Olga made the difference. As a double agent she was a perfect channel for transmission between Barranca and the *Reformistas*.

So they had to kill the consul to get the book, which could then be sold back to Barranca for a stiff sum, no doubt. At the same time, they could make a copy of the book while it was in their hands. A question of having your cake and eating it too. But he would have to have words with Olga.

"You should make a neat profit selling the book back," Shayne said.

Chaldron threw back his head and laughed. He said that money was a great asset to political parties and the sweeter when provided by one's own opponents.

"One thinks of money, Shayne. I am ten years in this country. It is comfortable, compared to the

way I lived in Orovista. One gets used to it. Do you think that every political exile holds firm to his dreams? It is hard. We are like the rest of mankind. Some succeed, but most fail and life goes on. Even if we win the next election I may not return."

He sighed, added, "Two a.m., then," and got out of Shayne's car. He lumbered back toward the cafe. Shayne sat back for several minutes, turning matters over in his mind. There was a hitch. Barranca was not stupid and neither was Sarza. Something was still missing and his mind brushed against it but could not grasp it.

It had something to do with Chaldron's last speech, something to do with the Cafe Espirito.

The *Reformistas* lacked a sense of the deadly and a sense of urgency.

He shook his head, drove around the block and parked. He made his way back down the alley he had exited after talking to the fake Chaldron. There should be a guard at the door. His gun came out and he tried the door. It was open. He slid through, gun at ready, and came face to face with a young Latin male.

The man stared at him fuzzily. "I have acquired too much wine," he said.

"That is unfortunate," said Shayne.

"With your permission, I shall go into the alley and vomit," said the young man.

"Stand close to the building, out of consideration for others," said Shayne.

He stood aside and the young man went outside. Shayne waited a moment, gun ready, but faint sounds assured him the young man had not lied. He shrugged and moved on down the corridor. He paused at the door of the office the fake Chaldron had used and heard voices. It was probably really Chaldron's office and the man must be in there with Olga, reporting on the two a.m. exchange.

Shayne had no further interest in Chaldron, the wilted *Reformista* leader. He wanted to talk to Olga alone. Dare he risk waiting in the bar, hiding in the crowd? She'd spot him in the hall and he'd miss her if he waited in the alley. Besides, the alley was not a place he wanted to wait right now.

From the door leading into the establishment, Shayne saw that there were several empty seats along the bar. People were having a good time. The babble from bar, restaurant and dance floor was almost deafening, while the music added its share to the confusion. His conviction grew that this was a very relaxed revolutionary group.

He reached a bar stool without challenge and ordered. When his drink came, he slid down several places so that he could watch the door where Olga would emerge in her ridiculous dark wig and

glasses. The woman on the next stool to him jostled him as she laughed at something her companion said.

He glanced at her — and saw that Olga would never come through that door over there. She was beside him. Her startled eyes fixed on his.

Shayne did a split-second calculation. Chaldron must be in his office with some aide. Olga was the one he wanted to talk to. He slid his gun, mostly concealed by his hand, against her side.

"Would the lady care to dance?" he asked.

"Oh, I — *ahhhh!*" Her eyes were round as saucers. "Well, yes, I could spare the time." She felt the gun, all right. She excused herself to her male companion. The man smiled and tipped his glass to her and Shayne.

As they walked to the floor, Shayne held the gun on Olga's spine. Several people smiled and greeted her, but she made no trouble, just nodded and kept walking ahead.

"I have changed my mind," said Shayne when they reached the dance floor. "I have a headache. I need air. I think we will leave the building."

"Shayne —"

He prodded her. They moved outside to the crowded parking lot.

"Shayne —" she begged.

"Find your car."

She shrugged and began

threading her way through the mess. There were no attendants — the Espirito was not that kind of cafe.

Shayne spilled all he suspected in fast, short words. Then, "The one thing I'm not going to stand for, Olga, is your using my secretary for some dirty game. You've lied. You told me it was the *Reformistas* who jumped you in the parking lot today, but it turns out you're buddy-buddy with them."

"No, it was Sarza. That's what bothered me so much — it still does. Why did he pull the gun on you? Why did he have his men rough me up in the parking lot? We're supposed to be on the same side. It's as if he wanted to slow me down or turn me aside."

"You said it was the *Reformistas*."

"At that point, I had to lie to you. You might be linked with Sarza. We hadn't seen the old lady yet, and I didn't know you well enough to trust you."

"Regardless," said Shayne, "I'm getting Lucy back and the manuscript goes to the old lady, not to these people. So forget about making a buck through Chaldron."

"Mike, you've got it all wrong. I am a double agent, but I know nothing of Lucy's capture or selling the manuscript. For me this is a night off — a chance to see and visit old *Reformista* friends."

"Since when do jet-setters mingle with broken-down revolutionaries?"

"I fell in love, Shayne. Raoul — an earnest young professor, poor and a revolutionary. Smart, sophisticated, bigshot me! Sarza's men got him and killed him. That's why I'm in this game."

A car swept into the front of the lot. Chaldron, the fat leader, appeared and ambled to it. A young woman got out of the car — words flew.

"Now that's odd," said Olga. "That's very odd, Mike. That woman is Elvira Browning. What's she doing here, of all places?"

Shayne had also recognized the woman he'd been seeking all evening. He said, "I want to talk to that one, too."

"Why? She's Sarza's girl friend."

This time Shayne felt really stunned, a rare thing for him. "She has to be a *Reformista*," he said. "She has to be working with Chaldron to set the theft up and confuse us with that murder."

"Oh, no. She's Sarza's girl friend, all right."

Across the lot the conversation ended. Chaldron turned with a shrug and walked back toward the cafe. Elvira Browning took a gun from her purse and shot him twice in the back. He arched up, staggered and collapsed in a heap. He had barely ceased moving

when Miss Browning was back in her car and traveling.

## VI

BY THE TIME Shayne cried, "Move this car!" Olga had already spun the engine on and ducked around other carelessly parked cars to take up the chase. As they swerved past Chaldron, Shayne spared the fallen man a glance. Chaldron had been right. He was not going back to Orovista ever again.

A couple of men came out of the restaurant, saw the corpse, saw Shayne and Olga fleeing. There were shouts. Then a gun exploded and they heard the zap of the bullet over their heads.

"Shall I take it?" said Shayne. "We don't want to lose Browning, and we don't want those friends of yours to catch us. The revolution's come awake and they might shoot first and ask questions later."

"I am not in your league, Shayne. That I know. But I can drive. Give me that. I can drive like hell!"

She was as good as her word. She stayed with Miss Browning, who was really not that good a driver, and they lost their pursuers from behind. The chase had been too slow in starting.

"What's happening, Mike? I'm lost," said Olga when they slowed down to a steady follow on Miss Browning.

"I was right. But I had the wrong woman, Olga. I'm sorry."

He told her there was a shake-down going on, but that Elvira Browning, not she, was the channel. She protested that the *Reformistas* would never deal with Sarza or his girl.

"Not the rank and file. But Chaldron would. He's old and tired and doesn't believe in the future any more. So he sold out to Sarza. He didn't understand he'd never live to collect. His value to them ended tonight."

They had crossed the causeway into Miami Beach, still following Miss Browning.

"Where is she headed?" Olga asked.

"To the harbor — to the yacht," said Shayne. He drew a deep breath.

"But where does kidnapping Lucy fit in?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Shayne. "But I could make a pretty good guess. Right now, the important thing is to get Lucy back. It's Sarza's game; so that means Lucy's on the yacht, and the next thing we do is get her out of there."

"Mike! We can't tie up to it without being seen."

"We don't tie up. We swim."

"At night?"

He smiled at her. "Me — I swim as well at night as in the daytime. Don't tell me an international private detective can only swim in the daytime."

Her jaw clamped. "Try me,

Shayne. I've swum every ocean in the world."

Olga proved her worth quickly by obtaining a small rowboat to take them out into the harbor. While Shayne rooted around, looking for a late-night seaman to rent a boat from, she got one free from a group of sailboat enthusiasts who were holding a party aboard a small docked yacht.

"They let me have it for nothing when I told them my boyfriend and I wanted a romantic midnight ride around the harbor," she said, smiling.

"I can promise you adventure," Shayne smiled. "That's romantic, I guess."

As the shore dropped away and Shayne rowed them into the inky blackness, Olga spoke of her deeper feelings. "I always liked the old lady. She is a good influence on some of the members of the powerful Ybarra family. When Barranca offered me the job of getting back the manuscript, I only took it when I found out that she also wanted it back."

"At the same time you thought you might make a copy for your *Reformista* friends."

"Yes, but there is no money involved."

"Can your reform party overturn Barranca's government?"

"I don't think so. If we could just turn Barranca out of office, that would be a start. He's killed too many good people, a real tyrant."

Shayne understood why things had been so relaxed at the Espirito — revolution was not imminent in Orovista. He asked about Miss Browning and Olga told him the woman was a free-booter. Secretary she might be, but she was also an adventuress. She had gone to Orovista and eventually worked for Sra. Ybarra in transcribing the original book. The consul had hired her locally on his old friend's recommendation.

"She might even have suggested that he take the copy and sneak it into this country to try for a publisher here, with Mrs. Ybarra's consent," Olga remarked. "They are both naive. Then she returned here to work for the consul, knowing through Sarza that Barranca would want the book back. I don't know why Sarza ever let the book leave the country. I do know Elvira Browning had bad judgment in becoming Sarza's mistress. He can be punishing. Maybe she likes that kind of man."

"She's savage, the way she shot Chaldron back there," said Shayne. "Maybe she also shot Rogers Austin."

"I don't think so. That was political assassination. Sarza could sell her on that. She worked for Austin and apparently liked him. I think Sarza did for Austin."

"We'll get 'em both," Shayne said.

Miss—Browning—had—already gone back to the Orovista yacht in a motor launch that had awaited her. Shayne could not help but shake his head at the complexity of things as he now understood them. Olga worked for Barranca but her heart was with the *Reformistas*. Elvira Browning dealt with the *Reformistas* but her heart belonged to Sarza. But why had Lucy and he been dragged into it? It was beginning to look as if Lucy's meeting Miss Browning had been not coincidence but deliberately planned.

"I hope your secretary is on Sarza's yacht, Shayne," said Olga. "I'd hate to take a midnight swim for nothing."

"She is. Miss Browning's actions prove that. But you don't have to swim. As Barranca's agent you could just stroll aboard."

"And be watched like a hawk. No, this is better."

Shayne found a buoy as close to the yacht as he could and tied up the rowboat.

"You could get closer," Olga complained.

"Sorry. We need something to anchor to. It's too dark to find our way back to a free-floating rowboat."

He looked over at the yacht. A lighted landing rig rested at sea level. The swim shouldn't be too bad if you didn't mind the darkness on the way. He stripped to his shorts. Olga stripped,

too. She had worn a dress to the restaurant. Now that came off, along with the shoes. In the darkness Shayne could see no details but there seemed to be a lot of white flesh. It seemed that the well-endowed Olga had not worn a bra, which could prove interesting later.

He took a deep breath and went over the side, cleaving the water with easy strokes. Moments later, when he had adjusted to the water temperature, he saw that Olga too, was a good swimmer. Together, they struck out across the blackness for the lighted landing rig.

There was a guard, of course, on deck, keeping an eye on the rig. He was in the same spot Shayne had occupied when he tossed the obnoxious Sarza overboard. Probably, unlike the friendly naval cadets, the guard would be loyal to Sarza. Once again, Olga proved her worth. She swam directly to the lighted rig and climbed the stairs, acting a bit tipsy. Shayne saw at once it would work. This yacht had seen plenty of wild parties in its time, with half-naked women taking midnight dips. And Olga Petersen was well known to the yacht personnel.

It was the easiest capture of a guard Shayne had ever made. As Olga stood there, a dripping nymph from the ocean, with her marvelous breasts fully exposed, the man stood hypnotized. Olga muttered, as if intoxicated, something about betting someone on



shore she could swim all the way out here. The man nodded, his eyes busy with the spectacular display. Shayne wisely did not let his eyes stray. A chop on the neck, a soft sigh, and they took the sleeping guard back into the shadows and tied him with his own necktie and coat sleeves. A nearby life preserver provided a strap for a gag.

"I trust you know the layout of the boat," Shayne whispered.

"Like the proverbial back of my hand. I know just the section they'd have to hide her in. There are only a couple of rooms that would do."

"I'll go first," said Shayne. "You call it from behind."

"Shayne, shouldn't I lead the way?"

"Considering your state of undress and my need to concentrate on the enemy, it is better I go first." Shayne smiled.

"Oh, Mike, you must have seen lots of undressed ladies."

"It's a matter of quality," he said, and struck out ahead of her.

Their luck held all the way through the dimly lit corridors of the luxury yacht. There were soft carpets under their bare feet, mirrors and expensive artwork all along the walls, until they reached the more modest section where, Olga whispered, unimportant guests were housed.

She told Shayne there were four isolated cabins, any one of which would serve Sarza's purpose.

Naturally, there was a guard in that corridor, and Shayne began to think their invasion could go off smoothly. Immobilize the guard, find Lucy and get off the cruiser before anyone was the wiser.

The guard carried a policeman's truncheon in his hand and his gun was holstered. Shayne meant to wait until the man turned his back and then take him in one giant leap. But Olga, satisfied with her first performance on the other guard, brushed past him and tried her drunken ploy again.

Unfortunately this guard had hair-trigger reactions. He spun and struck out with his club before he understood what was happening. It landed full on top of Olga's head. There was a melon-hitting sound and her eyes rolled back as she slumped to the floor. Shayne hit the man in the stomach and he doubled up with the wind knocked out of him. By the time he got it back, his own gun pointed at his head, trigger cocked.

"The prisoner's room," said Shayne in an icy voice. The man did not speak English but he understood what Shayne wanted. He had a tough face and Shayne knew, even as he held the gun on the man, that there would be further trouble. The guard shrugged and turned toward one of the doors. He grabbed the doorknob with both hands and, warned, Shayne stepped back quickly. A powerful leg lashed out in an effort

to kick the gun loose from Shayne's hand. At the same time the man gave a yell.

Shayne caught the leg, which just missed his hand, jerked, and the guard went down. As he scrambled up, Shayne threw his left in a driving hard blow at the man's face. A shot would certainly bring more trouble.

The man's head crashed into the door sill and he went still as he rolled over once and groaned. Shayne stepped over him and investigated the stateroom. It was not locked and was empty, of course. He listened a moment to see if the sounds of the scuffle and the man's yell had roused anyone. There was only silence. He debated whether to call Lucy's name, but decided she might be asleep or drugged.

The man lay still. He had to turn his attention to Olga. She had struggled up, apparently recovered from the blow on the head with the nightstick. She certainly met that standard of a private detective, he thought grimly — a durable noggin.

"Are you all right?" he called.

"In here, in here," she called back in urgency. She took his hand and pulled him into another stateroom. Again the door was unlocked and the room was dark.

"I don't think —" he began.

His arms were suddenly filled with soft, almost naked girl. Her mouth sought his and, before he understood that she was still

dazed from the blow, he found himself enveloped in a hot hug, with questing lips seeking his.

"Raoul, Raoul," she whispered. "We can make love now . . . It's been so long."

*This is just what I need in the middle of a rescue operation,* Shayne thought ironically, *to have to rescue one of the rescuers.* Olga obviously did not have quite as hard a head as he had hoped.

She pulled him toward the bunk in the room. "We have to make love . . ."

He went with her to the bed and laid her down on it. "You rest there a moment, Olga. I'll be right back."

She fell back with a sigh, still incoherent. Shayne returned to the door and peered out. No sign of additional Sarza guards. The man he had hit lay where Shayne had left him. Shayne moved out into the corridor and checked him out. The man's head had slapped the doorframe viciously, and he would not be making any trouble for Shayne or anyone else in the world. He had had it.

Looking down on the loutish face, Shayne felt no regrets. Murder and torture were written there — the guard had brought more than his share of pain into the world, and the world was well rid of him.

## VII

HE HEARD A SLIGHT hissing

sound. It came from one of the other stateroom doors, the only one with a key on the outside. He went to the door and saw a busy nail file sawing along just above the lock. He grinned. The indomitable Lucy was not staying put for her captors, as he had known she wouldn't.

He gave the nail file a tug, felt the surprise reaction on the other side of the door. For a long moment the file remained frozen. Then it began to zip again, in a tentative fashion. He unlocked the door, pushed it open and for the first time since Friday night looked into the face of his beloved secretary.

"Michael! I knew you'd come!"  
"Angel!"

They hugged, they kissed. For Shayne, the worst part of the case was over. But after a few moments of a joyful reunion it was time to move along. Lucy looked very tired, her face drawn. She told Shayne she hadn't slept much since Saturday and began to recount her experiences in a rush of words.

"Easy, Angel. Save it." He hugged her once again, reassuring himself that she was all right. She was, and equilibrium had been restored to his world. He led her out of the room, explaining that they had to sneak off the yacht and might have to swim to a nearby rowboat.

"I can help you —"

"Michael, it's the tension of

being locked up. I feel like swimming fifty miles, just to get away from these *Reformistas*."

He didn't bother to tell her who her captors had been. They went into the other stateroom, where Olga was now sitting up on the edge of the bed. Under other circumstances it would have been delightful to see the expression on Lucy's face.

"Michael! Who — is this?"

Even in the dim light, Olga presented quite a picture. He entire costume consisted of panties, plastered to her by the swim in the ocean. The rest was bare skin and soft beauty.

"Olga Petersen. You haven't met her or heard of her. She's an international private detective," said Shayne. "She's been of great help . . . Olga, are you all right?"

"I'm fine, Shayne. I was pretty dizzy but the short rest helped."

She took Lucy's hand. "You must be the fabulous secretary Shayne has been so disturbed about. Delighted to meet you."

"Likewise," said Lucy pressing the extended hand but not sounding ecstatic. "Wouldn't you like more clothing?"

"Not much point," said Olga without self-consciousness.

"We've still got a long swim ahead."

"We won't get to make it at all if we stand here talking," said Shayne impatiently.

They made it all the way back to the landing rig without running

into anyone. Then their luck ran out again. Sarza himself and two guards stood squarely in the front of the ladder that led down to the ocean level, and the guard Shayne had tied up had been released. Shayne heard his name mentioned in the excited babble.

"Sarza knows you're aboard," Lucy interpreted.

"He's sending the guards to check the prisoner's room," Olga added.

"Then we go over the side," said Shayne, looking down into the blackness. He felt Lucy shrink back instinctively — it was a high dive from the second deck into the water.

"Why make a hard dive?" said Olga. She waved a half-empty bottle of vodka she had apparently picked up in the stateroom. "I'll create a diversion and you two can go right down the ladder to sea level."

She sprinted halfway up the deck and then began to stagger and sing in a loud, drunken voice, waving her bottle.

"What's the she-devil up to now?" asked Lucy, annoyed.

"International private detectives are flashier," grunted Shayne. But he was secretly pleased. He did not want Lucy to have to take that long dive into the black water in her condition.

In less than a minute, Olga was the center of attention. There was the sound of running feet, then lights and an excited babble of

Spanish. She stood on the deck rail, twined about a stanchion, waving her bottle. Sarza and his guards rushed up from the top side of the landing rig, moving within three feet of Lucy and Shayne. With Olga's dazzling figure outlined in spotlights, there was no danger he would see them. Male eyes were riveted on the beauty who clung to the deck rail.

As soon as she saw the Colonel, Olga cried:

"Sarza, you have missed the fun in Miami! A *great* drinking city! I have swum all the way out. Take off your clothes. We swim back. . . make a night of it!"

"Miss Petersen, you are drunk and making trouble with Shayne!" he called. "I must arrest you."

"Come on, Colonel. You've tried a hundred times to get me to strip for you. Take off your clothes . . . swim! Tonight's our *night*!"

Sarza cursed and ordered his men forward. Shayne and Lucy waited to see no more. The way was clear and they pounded down the ladder. At the level of the lapping water, Lucy got rid of her dress and shoes.

"I may not be able to play a mermaid as flashy as that one," she said. "But I'll bet I can swim as well if not better."

"And look as sexy," said Shayne with an admiring glance. Then they went into the water.

Far from having to help Lucy, Shayne found he had to swim all-out to keep up with her.

Two and a half days of forced inactivity in a small ship's cabin had made Lucy eager for physical freedom. She was a strong swimmer, not as powerful as Shayne, but beautiful in the water once she hit her stride.

Shayne looked back once and saw Olga evade Sarza's men, climb high on the stanchion to avoid grappling hands and then perform an exquisite dive all the way to the water, her lithe body a graceful flash in the dazzling lights. It was real showmanship, but he understood that when you moved in the jet set a certain amount of exhibitionism was necessary. It was the opposite side of the coin from his own operations, quiet, discreet, unpretentious . . .

Shayne and Lucy reached the rowboat without incident and Lucy, far from depressed by all that had happened, positively bubbled.

"On most cases, Michael, I'm sitting in the office or helping hide some poor soul from an enemy or answering phones. This time, I really got some action. I almost wish someone had taken a shot at us."

"We came closer than you might think," said Shayne.

The boat rocked. A wet blond head appeared over the side.

"Well, that's *that*," said Olga. "I guess we'd better be getting this boat back to the boys who lent it to me."

Shayne enjoyed the ride back to shore, complete with his two lovely mermaids . . .

LUCY BROUGHT SHAYNE and Olga up to date when they reached her apartment. As early as Friday night she had sensed that somebody was following her and keeping an eye on her apartment. A fat man, a Latin type. It was only pride that had kept her from contacting Shayne.

"I called Miss Browning and she warned me that the *Reformistas* might try to steal the manuscript. I thought I could handle it."

On Saturday morning, Lucy had spent time on Mrs. Ybarra's pages and decided that the translator would have to be a professional. The so-called book was a hodgepodge of anecdotes, descriptions and sketches, obviously dictated by the woman and transcribed as was by Miss Browning. Lucy called Miss Browning and made a luncheon date to return the manuscript. But on the way, the heavy-set Latin followed her again.

"Chaldrón," murmured Olga.

Lucy had detoured to the office and hidden the manuscript for Shayne to find. She had already decided that it had more importance than she had been told.

"Right there, in a brilliant stroke, you spiked Sarza's game," and Shayne. "He counted on

picking up both you and the manuscript. But he wanted you to think it was the *Reformistas* that had you. He wanted me to think the same."

Lucy had never kept the luncheon date, of course. As she parked her car at the designated restaurant, two no-nonsense types slid into the car and she was blindfolded and taken to the yacht, still thinking it was the revolutionists. They had treated her well, but she had had no chance to escape. One of them must have planted her purse at the villa later.

"You were a long time in coming, Michael," she sighed.

"I was actually on the yacht a couple of decks above your head earlier today," he admitted. "But then I didn't know the game."

"We still don't know the game," said Olga in a depressed voice. Wearing one of Lucy's dresses, which she filled very well, the blond detective seemed subdued now that the action was over.

"Lucy gave us another clue," said Shayne. "We know now why that editor was killed and why Barranca is hot for this particular manuscript even with the pirated copies of the other about."

"Of course!" cried Olga. "The editor — he *edits!*"

"Exactly," said Shayne. "Lucy just told us the manuscript is a hodgepodge."

He went on to say the the Orovista editor had probably cut out half of the old lady's original

ramblings. The abridged version was what the printer had printed. Whatever bothered the President-General had been cut out of the script that went to the printer and was photocopied. But the editor had seen it, in his careful perusal of the original. Or Barranca thought he had. So the editor died.

"But the one we have is an exact copy of the original," Olga said. "The cut parts of the original were struck out, or cut up or thrown away. So this copy is the last evidence of the original, never mind the harmless abridged versions still existing."

"Now you've got it," said Shayne. "Since the shooting of the family head appears in the abridged version, that wasn't what upsets the President-General."

"Business as usual in Orovista," said Olga sadly. "What disturbs Barranca is much more personal and damaging."

"You two bright brains forget one thing," said Lucy. "Mrs. Ybarra herself wrote every word of the original. Or dictated it. So she would know what bothers him."

Shayne shook his head.

"Not necessarily. She stacked up incident after incident, a whole welter of material. What bothers Barranca could only be a few lines out of thousands. The old lady could have written or dictated something damaging and not even have realized it."

"Not seen the trees for the forest," Olga nodded.

"So — starting tomorrow," said Shayne to Lucy, "we'll get a professional translator to help you and you can dig through the whole set of pages and we'll try to fathom what bothers the President-General."

Lucy welcomed that chore. "I want to get revenge on the rats that gave me those bad few days," she said.

Rescued and safe in her own apartment, Lucy was too exhausted to provide any further company. Shayne made a couple of calls and in a short time two young men appeared. They had big shoulders, guarded eyes and looked as if they had to shave at least twice a day. Each sported a telltale bump just below the shoulder. Only then did Shayne escort Olga back to her Miami Beach hotel.

Olga had to laugh. "With another five or six bodyguards like that," she said, "we could start — and finish — a whole revolution in Orovisa."

"I'm taking no more chances with Sarza," grunted Shayne. "If he comes around her apartment now he'll end up with his head missing."

"He won't," Olga laughed. "It's the dead of night — overtime. Barranca doesn't pay Sarza — or anyone — for overtime. Barranca runs a tight ship and makes Sarza run a tighter one."

Shayne said, "I thought one of the advantages of being a presi-

dent is that you don't worry about money, not personally."

"Wrong," said Olga. "Half the jet-setters I know are rich, powerful — and miserly. You'd be surprised at how many mansions I've stayed at where lunch is a tuna salad sandwich and a glass of tea."

At least penury didn't apply to the lovely Olga. When they reached her suite, Shayne was struck again by the size and opulence of the rooms, compared to the loneliness of the little blonde.

"Dead of night," she said to Shayne with a sad laugh, as she dropped into a chair. "It's the worst time for private detectives, Mike. The rest of the world's gone off and left us. So we sit in a car, or peer at some pictures, or listen to some recording, or perhaps pace around our cages, unable to sleep and wondering why some Cock Robin had to be killed. Night-time is the worst."

Shayne sat down for a second. He had caught some of her mood. "I've seen some brutal nights myself, Olga. Dark times when I didn't expect to reach the dawn. It goes with the job."

She gave a rueful laugh. "You'd think I'd sleep after a day like this. After the rushing around, the companionship, the excitement. I won't — unless . . ."

There was a soft aura around her beautiful head. Shayne sensed that he was seeing the basic girl, stripped of her aggressions and



exhibitionism, sad and wistful.

She sighed, rose, and got two glasses. She remembered that Shayne liked Martell. She lit two cigarettes and handed him one.

"Would you stay with me for the rest of the night, Shayne — Mike?"

He sipped his drink and took a deep drag on his cigarette. "Olga — since you're my first, and probably my last truly international female private detective, I will stay the night."

She was fantastic. The best part of it, Shayne thought, was that she understood exactly where he was emotionally . . .

## VIII

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, Shayne sat in Will Gentry's office, filling him in on the Chaldron killing of the previous night. With Lucy safe and the manuscript in his hands, he had to hold nothing back. Gentry listened, scowling, chomping on his big, unlit cigar.

"For once, Shayne, you're helping me one helluva lot. That gives me two witnesses against the Browning woman, and we can pick her up right away. We've been questioning these *Reformista* types all night. You and this jet-set blonde were the only ones who saw the actual shooting. It's more than enough. With your statements, we nail her."

"I like Sarza for the Rogers Austin shooting," said Shayne.

"That's going to make your State Department friends unhappy."

The Chief grunted assent. The problem with the Colonel was that he had diplomatic immunity.

"We can still grab him for a felony," said Gentry. "But I'll get pressure, especially when I've got no proof to speak of. Still, I'm not going to let any living man, regardless of his status, come into my territory and commit a cold-blooded killing and walk out of it."

"There's a way to nail Sarza," said Shayne. "It's an offbeat approach."

"Make it good, and I can give you some leeway," said Gentry. "I'm already pretending I don't know you have that manuscript. If I hand it over to that boy to satisfy the State Department over their diplomatic pouch embarrassment, Sarza'll be gone with his boat before we can turn around."

"The key is, he set me up," said Shayne. "He set up Michael Shayne Private Investigations as part of his scheme to shake down his own boss."

He explained to Gentry that Sarza had seen the manuscript as a chance to wring some big money out of a tight-fisted Barranca. Once the manuscript was out of the country, Barranca would pay a fortune to get it and destroy it. All Sarza had to do was convince the dictator, back in Orovista, that the *Reformistas* had it, and the treasury doors would fly open.

"But Barranca wasn't born

yesterday," Shayne went on. "He's not going to lay out a million pesos or more just because Colonel Sarza gets on the international telephone and says that Chaldron has the manuscript. Also, Barranca spots collusion if Chaldron taunts him. After all, Barranca has spent a lifetime in shaking down his own *jefes* on his way up. So Sarza does a clever thing. Can you take it from there?"

Gentry slapped the desk and roared. "The clever sonofabitch picks a highly reputable private detective who has no possible connection — shoves the book in his hands and roughs up his secretary. The detective has high connections with the police and press. The detective screams to high heaven — it goes out on the wires, and Barranca swallows twice and puts the bite on the treasury for big bucks."

Shayne nodded. "It's funny — if you're not the victim. I figure my name on it is worth an extra million pesos or whatever they call their dollar down there."

"Sorry, Shayne," said the Chief. "But it is goddamn clever."

"Which is why Sarza acted like such a boor to me. Remember, he had to run his game down a narrow alley. He's got Olga Petersen, a pretty good private detective, grabbing for the book and he has the old lady on the yacht. Her friend, Rogers Austin, would simply trot over and hand back the

manuscript. No shakedown bucks that way."

"I think you've got it, Shayne."

"Sarza's given me a bad time," said Shayne. "Now it's my turn — if you'll help."

SHAYNE SAT ACROSS from his old friend, Tim Rourke, reporter for the *Miami News*, at the Beef House. He was about to mangle a steak, but Tim, with his emaciated figure and face and wrinkled suit, was not about to let him enjoy it . . . or to enjoy his own food.

"Damnit, Mike, there's a juicy story floating around this town — maybe the best of the year. You're in on it, you and Gentry, and the press only gets the dribbles of the gravy."

He went on to outline the details — a highly placed woman of the Orovista nobility on a yacht, a juicy scandal book that the president of a country tried to suppress, the murder of a U.S. diplomat, and another murder of a revolutionary figure, not to mention the kidnapping of a private detective's secretary . . .

"You've got it all, Tim," said Shayne. "You just don't have the links in between."

"My editor isn't printing it till we get them," growled the unhappy newspaperman.

Shayne took a bite of his luscious steak and smiled at his old friend.

"Old buddy, the tide's about to

turn. I need you at this point, and if you can help, you'll get your story on a silver platter. I guarantee you, it's byline and wire-service stuff."

"Big, huh?" said the mollified Rourke. He began to attack his food with some enthusiasm.

"How does this grab you?" said Shayne. "Four lines in an unpublished manuscript can topple the president of a huge, modern South Smerican nation."

Tim's eyes glowed. "tell me what you need, Mike. I'd sell my soul for a hot one like this!"

Shayne discovered, as he had expected, that both AP and UPI had bureaus in the capital of Orovista. They were staffed by good people and Tim was sure he could reach straight to Barranca through one of them.

"It has to be right to the top," Shayne assured Tim. "The state police of Orovista must have not the slightest inkling . . ."

Later, Tim reported back to Shayne that he had found a correspondent so close to the President-General that he could walk into the man's bathroom while he was shaving. And had done so . . .

Olga told Shayne she was on the spot.

"Sarza got Barranca to order me to stay on the yacht. Once I go there, he'll find ways to keep me aboard, Mike. I have to either go or quite the assignment."

"In exactly three days this thing will blow sky-high," Shayne told

her. "I'd rather have you on Sarza's yacht. I want somebody to keep an eye on the old lady. I don't think either Barranca or Sarza want to see her return home, once they've got the book, and they're about to get it."

"You're turning the book over to Sarza?" Her eyes widened.

"Sarza will get it — but don't worry about it, Olga," he said.

Lucy, her translation job finished, had fallen back into her old routines.

"I'm glad that wild blonde detective is gone," she told Shayne. "I didn't think she was very professional."

"You have to remember, Lucy, that she works with a different clientele, on a different level."

"Yes, in the gutter," was Lucy's unkind retort . . .

Sarza's call, directly to Shayne, finally came through. It was a week after the rescue episode on the yacht.

"I've got the money, Shayne. Are you ready to sell?"

"I'm ready to sell — if you have the million pesos."

"I have them."

"I also want Mrs. Ybarra — and Olga. I've decided my client, Mrs. Ybarra, will fly back to Orovista with Olga, not return on the boat."

"Shayne, that's *impossible!*"

"Colonel Sarza," said Shayne mildly, "why do you give me a bad time? You have to have the manuscript. Otherwise, you can't

pocket the extra million pesos that Barranca sent, over my million. So — what do you care if the old lady flies back?"

There was a long pause. Then Sarza said in a choked voice, "Shayne, if you lived in my country you'd have been dead long ago."

Shayne's voice took on a deadly quality. "Sarza, if I lived in your country and met you, you wouldn't have lived past your thirtieth year."

"You killed one of my guards."

"You killed an American diplomat. Give it up, Sarza. We'll do it my way, and you know it."

The night before the final exchange, Gentry called Shayne.

"We just picked up a body in the bay. Elvira Browning."

"You couldn't get her off the yacht, huh?"

"No way. The Coast Guard blocked it."

Shayne sighed. "Well, that takes care of the Chaldron death."

"Case closed," Gentry agreed.

"Are you set for tomorrow? I'll feel better when that damned book manuscript leaves the country."

"It's all set, Will."

Afterward, Shayne thought about Elvira Browning and felt sorry. But the adventuress had asked for it all the way down the line. Like Chaldron, she hadn't understood that, once her job was done, her life meant nothing to Sarza. So Mrs. Ybarra's manuscript continued to spill blood . . .

## IX

IT WAS A WARM and sunny afternoon when Shayne and Tim Rourke set out into the bay in a small motor launch lent by the police. Bathers sported in the water, and the air was still enough for a skywriter to be advertising a popular soft drink.

A police helicopter lazily patrolled the beach area. The official yacht of Orovista stood white and remote in the distance, but the two men could see the small boat that left her side. Shayne put the binoculars on the small boat and saw Sarza, Olga and Mrs. Ybarra. So far, so good.

"Keep your eyes on the water," Shayne told Tim.

"You were expecting a mermaid?" Tim kidded him.

"More likely some of Sarza's frogmen with a little plastic explosive," Shayne told him. "Sarza misses few tricks."

"My God! Shayne — he wouldn't dare!"

"You don't know Sarza. He wouldn't dare kill an American diplomat, either, or kidnap my secretary, but he did. I take no chances."

Tim's eyes sparkled. "I knew you wouldn't hand me a dull afternoon, Mike."

The two small boats met at a point equidistant from both the yacht and the shore. Sarza was dressed in his finest uniform and

saluted gravely as they hooked together. Shayne returned an ironic salute. This man was as bloody and dangerous as any he had met in a long career of dealing with killers.

Mrs. Ybarra looked as regal as ever, standing in Sarza's small boat in the middle of the bay. There was no escaping it — Donna Estrelita Ybarra would show class under any conditions. The Colonel gave a bow tinged with mockery as she stepped over from his boat to Shayne's.

"The things she needs come by another boat," said Sarza.

He extended a thick brown envelope to Shayne. Shayne took it, glanced inside, pocketed it. He ignored Sarza's still outstretched hand and placed the thick manuscript in the hands of Donna Ybarra instead.

"Your manuscript, dear lady, returned as you asked me to do. The fee will be small because I was more of a custodian for it than a searcher."

Sarza looked annoyed and dropped his hand, but said nothing. The old lady stood in the boat, holding on to her manuscript, absently riffling the pages and staring off into space. The harbor was quiet at the moment.

"It was a work done in good faith," said the old lady. "I wrote it to help the people of Orovista, but a good many have died because of it, and I am truly sorry for that."

"You forget that a great many more may still be alive because of it," said Shayne. "I imagine you have greatly lessened the zeal of some of your country's super-patriots."

Tears glistened in the old lady's eyes. She pressed Shayne's hand.

"Thank you, Mr. Shayne. Your fee will be generous because, along with your efficiency, you have provided my trip with some delights." She gave Sarza a look of amusement, and he colored. Then she handed over the manuscript.

"Let Barranca sleep," she said. Then she permitted Tim to help her to a seat in Shayne's boat.

Sarza quickly flipped through the pages of the manuscript to a particular spot, looked at it, and nodded.

"It is all here, Shayne. I count on it that no copy remains behind."

"No copy remains in America to embarrass you," Shayne replied.

Sarza nodded, and Olga stepped forward. She looked tired and drawn. As she moved to step into Shayne's boat, Sarza stopped her.

"I will take the recorder, young lady," he said.

She glanced at Shayne and looked back at Sarza.

"The recorder in your purse," he said. "The one you had during our interesting conversation the other night."

Olga looked confused and guilty. "Oh — *that* one." She opened her purse reluctantly, and

brought out a small recorder. "But — it belongs to Mr. Shayne."

"I want it."

She handed him the recorder, and as he took it she expertly flipped the cassette it had contained over to Shayne, who caught it.

"So take it," she said lightly, winked at Shayne, and stepped over into his boat.

Sarza looked angry. Then he smiled, and actually laughed. "You two make quite a team — but it doesn't matter. Whatever I said about the death of your consul, those words will not reach me in Orovista. Here, Shayne, I have no need for your empty recorder. I have several just like it."

Shayne only hoped that Olga had not had to give up too much to tease the Colonel into his confession about the shooting of Rogers Austin. He was sure the cassette in his pocket would satisfy Gentry.

With Olga seated, Shayne unhooked the boats and cast off with a foot shove against Sarza's boat. The Colonel stood there alone in his small boat, holding the manuscript and waving.

"I enjoyed my stay in Miami very much, Shayne," he called.

"Be sure your luck doesn't run out," grunted Shayne. He switched on the engines and the boat started toward shore. He stood up and waved.

"Do you have to be so friendly?" asked Olga. "He was a pig to the end."

"Hey," called Tim. "I think I see some shadows in the water!"

The police helicopter that had been patrolling the harbor lazily suddenly swooped over them. Lines were dropped to Shayne's boat.

"I wasn't waving to Sarza," said Shayne. "Mrs. Ybarra, forgive us, but we are going to ride back to shore in the air, not in the water."

"Just in case those shadows in the water are frogmen with a nasty package of explosives to set off under us," said Tim as he helped Shayne adjust the ropes.

Within moments the boat was secure. Shayne turned off the outboard engine and the helicopter lifted them until they began to skim above the water toward shore. Olga cheered, Sna. Ybarra laughed happily at the floating ride. The bathers and sailors along the shore stared.

Tim had the binoculars on Sarza, who was a small figure now on a small boat in the harbor.

"Friend Sarza didn't like your trick a bit, Shayne. He'd stamp a hole in the boat if he dared. I believe that klutz did send out his frogmen to us."

The sudden explosion in the harbor was a burst of red flame and a tremendous roar. It echoed off the large buildings and rumbled into the distance. Sailboats suddenly tacked and motorboats veered at that abrupt eruption,

while on the shore people ran back and forth in excitement trying to see what happened.

A small geyser of water and white smoke rose where Sarza's small craft had been. The watchers in Shayne's boat saw a flash of debris and then the boil of the water where the boat had been and outgoing waves, but nothing, nothing else. Colone Sarza, the boat and the manuscript had ceased to exist.

"I thought Barranca might have sent an agent to instruct the frogmen in a double duty," said Shayne.

At Miami's International Airport next day, the usual long lines of weary incoming travelers fought the usual battle with the overburdened custom lines. But the lounge for the outgoing plane to Orovista was pleasantly casual as Shayne, Mrs. Ybarra and Olga arrived to wait for the plane's departure. The old lady dozed with a smile on her lips.

"She really enjoyed her time in Miami, Mike," said Olga. "You and Tim and Lucy gave her the best time she'd had in years."

"And Tim got the best interview and story he's had in months." Shayne smiled. "It's bound to be picked up by the South American press and in Orovista. Barranca can't stop that, and I think he'll find it prudent to make no more trouble for Mrs. Ybarra."

"She's looking forward to see-

ing her children and grandchildren and enjoying her retirement — thanks to you."

Shayne handed the envelope he had received the day before from Colonel Sarza to Olga. "This is for you to use in Orovista, Olga, in whatever manner helps the most."

Her eyes misted and she hugged Shayne. "I'll miss our collaboration. The money will be put to good use to defeat Barranca — his own money."

"Oh, you won't need the money for that, Olga." He scribbled something on a piece of paper.

He went on: "This is the name of a man in one of the press bureaus in Orovista. He has a copy of the Ybarra manuscript. I told Sarza the truth — there is no copy left behind in the States — but there is at least one in Orovista, because I made a Xerox and sent it. Here is the page reference that you should look up. It's only four or five lines, but it will destroy Barranca."

"What is it?"

"Barranca was once a young police officer in a small town in Orovista. His name was slightly different then, but any knowledgeable politico would know it at once."

He paused. "You can read the rest yourself. It's pretty bad — and enough to destroy him for good. Now I'll say goodbye. I have to meet Lucy and get back to something relatively normal."



# The Fourth Straw

By Dana Lyon

The fun and games include rape . . . and worse . . . in this chilling portrait of modern American suburbia.

## *Sunday Morning*

THERE WAS SILENCE for a few moments, while the almost naked bodies lay beside the pool, trying to restore their wits and to recover yesterday's well-being. It was hard going. Their eyes were bloodshot and their heads pounding with last night's leftover uproar, glorious then, horrifying now.

"Is there no relief in sight?" one of the women murmured. "Why hasn't a cure ever been discovered?"

"There is one," said her husband, lifting his head from his arms. "Time."

Silence took over again. No one had the strength to talk; it took all their reserve energy just to breathe.

Finally the host of this Sunday morning hangover group of guests lifted his head long enough to call in a croaking voice, "Hey, doll, hurry with that medicine while we can still swallow!"

"Coming, dear," said a cheery voice, and his wife Margery appeared in the patio doors, tray in hand holding eight glasses

filled with blood. Or so it seemed.

"Just in time," murmured Doris Blakeny, next-door neighbor on the right. "Now I know what it's like to die... That long black tunnel."

Silence as the four women sipped, the four men gulped.

"My God!" cried the host, who was known as Rodney. "What the hell is this slop? How much vodka did you put in it, anyway, lover-girl?"

"Oh, criminy!" said lover-girl, jumping up. "I forgot to put *any* in! Isn't that just like me?"

Her husband appealed to his guests. "Isn't she a little love? A real dish of grape-nuts. Cute, but with the mind of a mosquito. Bring the bottle, pet, and I'll fill our glasses with the only known antidote for what ails us."

As her husband said, she was indeed cute. Small and bouncy, with touseled blonde hair that never seemed to be combed but suited her no other way, round blue eyes, and an eternally surprised look on her face as if to wonder how she had

ever happened to appear in such a wonderful world. Her compact body was encased in a one-piece bathing suit of shining blue satin that embraced her like her own skin, but she was well aware that she was twice as delectable in her body-cover as the other women were in their tiny bikini scraps of cloth. The men eyed her like rapacious dogs on the prowl for a side of beef, though they all knew that only one could stake his prey with any success — Margery's husband, Rod. Margery was not accessible to anyone else. The others had tried, their jowls figuratively drooling, but no luck.

Oddly enough, the other women, neighbors and best friends on either side of the Morrisons' house, liked Margery; they knew she was no competition. Doris was tall, dark and, in or out of a bikini, stately in her own manner of elegance. Allison was the robust type of athletic girl, gone to muscle rather than fat, swinging a tennis racket during the week, a golf club on weekends, and managing to use up the rest of her energy as a frantic gardener and housekeeper when she wasn't working in a boutique downtown, appearing on a dozen or so civic boards, knocking her lesser husband around when he didn't come up to her standards, then falling into bed with him in a frantic orgy of bliss.

And then there was Phyllis,

the little blonde with the bland face and the twitching behind, totally naive as to the ways of men but believing that they had only one object in view—herself. She couldn't have been more mistaken. What Margery knew, and Phyllis did not, was that the sexual revolution had hardly made a dent in man's instinctive prerogative as the pursuer, not the pursued. Phyllis's husband, Don, always on the make himself, nevertheless was constantly on the lookout for those studs who lusted after his wife, since he was the possessive type, but they were few and far between. Phyllis and Don lived across the street; therefore all four couples were so concentrated as to their dwelling places that they were free to whoop it up periodically without having to worry about driving home afterward, although once Don hadn't quite made it home and was found lying in the middle of the street by the early morning garbage collectors who at first thought he was a bundle of rags and almost threw him in the compactor.

Eight people lying around the Morrison pool, drinking Bloody Marys and waiting for Time, the great healer, to come to their aid.

Margery said brightly — she always seemed to be bright, although this Sunday morning of flattened guests was hardly the time for it, "Anyone ready for

breakfast? Scrambled eggs? Bacon? Sausage?"

"Arg-g-h," said somebody. "Give us more time." She dove neatly into the pool, her pale blue satin bathing suit flashing in the sun, while Phyllis dipped her toe in the heated water. "E-ech," she said. "Two cold for swimming," and stood there in her tiny three pieces of cloth, looking as if she wished she didn't have to bother with them.

Finally, at long last, green faces turned pink, heads lifted from the arms, prone bodies turned supine in order to benefit from the warming sun.

"Well," said Rodney. "I guess now is the time for grub. How about some scrambled eggs and bacon, lovey?"

"Fine," she said, jumping up. "Oh lord," and a dismayed look leaped to her face. "No bacon! I forgot it."

"Any eggs?" asked her husband, knowing the answer.

"Well. A few."

"Why the hell don't you ever make a list when you go shopping?"

"I do. But —"

"But you forget to take it with you. Right?"

"Right." She lolled and stretched. "A bad memory, that's what I have. But I can't remember everything. Right, my lord?"

"Wrong, my lady. You can't remember *anything*." His

eyes fell morosely on the gate in the fence, and then on the glass patio doors. "Unlocked again, I see. You want that bloody-minded Southside Rapist to get you? Because that's what he'll do one of these nights. Or days. Right through the gate, dearie, and into your boudoir."

"Kitchen, you mean," she said, giggling. "That's where most of the action around this mansion takes place. My my, but it was crowded last night. Every single person in the world was there sucking on his favorite bottle. And then I forgot the *hors d'oeuvres*, all nice and cozy in their bacon wraps in the fridge. Hey, that's where the bacon went! And the deviled eggs. That's where the eggs went! Still there, for all I know."

"It's a wonder you didn't forget dinner," her mate muttered.

"Oh, but I did. Don't you remember? *That* went into the garbage — I thought it was the leftovers."

A murmur of laughter went around the pool — one of the guests had once said that it was more fun listening to Marge and Rod having a fight than making love under water. Not that any of them had tried it.

"Anyone hear anything more about our friendly neighborhood rapist?" asked Don. "Phyllis is all tied up in knots, thinks every service man who comes to

the door is going to get her. She can't wait." There was an uneasy laugh; they were now in territory that wasn't exactly a laughing matter.

FOOD FORGOTTEN, the men were now alone at the pool, the women having gathered together in the kitchen, as was typical of any collection of men and women (providing they were married). They were recovering by degrees from last night's brawl and were now about to become human again.

"I shall never, ever —" said Don, "even attempt to get as stoned as I was last night."

"Oh, shut up," said Rodney. "Give yourself a week of abstinence and you'll be back on the sauce again. Just like all of us."

"Why?" said Doris' husband, Joe.

"Only way to get through life. We don't have enough trouble paying our taxes, putting up with our bosses, ditto with wives, but now we've got that god-damned rapist to worry about. How the hell does he do it? How does he get away with it? In broad daylight?"

"Waits around till hubby leaves for work, walks in the door right after he leaves, dons his ski mask, rapes the little woman. Why? My God, willing females are a dime a dozen these days, why go to all the bother? All you have to say to a

dame nowadays is, 'Nice meeting you. See you in bed;' and that's it. Why the hell use force?"

"Guy's sick," said Joe.

"So what's the answer? He's still dangerous. He's killed two women already and God knows how many more there'll be."

"The answer," said Don, "is very simple. Tell the little woman to bolt the doors after you leave. They can't seem to get the idea that because it's a nice June morning they're perfectly safe. This guy never breaks in, he *walks* in. Even when other people are there, for God's sake. Holds that knife at the dame's throat and no one dares move a step while he does his work. What are the cops *doing*, for God's sake?"

"Using a helicopter around this section trying to spot him. Think he's going to do anything when he can hear the thing a hundred feet overhead? They must be nuts."

"Thirty thousand reward out for him now," said one of them lazily. "To what purpose? Who ever sees the guy? And if they caught him they'd do it without any reward — turn him in, I mean. Everyone's itching to get him."

"Well, thirty grand might make someone move faster. Or be on the lookout for the neighborhood dumdummy."

"I hear there's a vigilante group getting together," said Don. "You know what? If we —

if they, I mean — spotted the rapist and took a shot at him, we'd end up in jail for the next ten years. Not the rapist, who would simply be sent to a psychiatrist — the guy who did the shooting.

"Right," said their host. "And if I've told Marge once, I've told her a thousand times: *keep the doors bolted after I leave!*"

"What's his score now?"

"Eighteen, up to last week. The cops are busy chasing kids who start grass fires — no time for rapists."

One of the men said, "We ought to make an example —"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, supposing someone, one of us, puts on a ski mask and threatens Marge, who absolutely never locks a door, scare the bejesus out of her, she tells the other wives, all of 'em finally lock their doors."

"Doris does," said her husband.

"Phyllis does," said her husband.

"Allison does," said her husband.

They all looked at Rod. "Marge doesn't," he said. "*She forgets.*"

...They talked. And talked. And talked. They had a sustaining drink, and kept on talking.

THE WIVES, now in the living room, each had a Tom Collins in hand, and talked. About the cost of living. The bargains

at Rayles, downtown. The kids who were going around stealing hanging baskets off the front porch. Next week's trip to Tahoe. Or whatever. But not about the rapist. He was something that happened to other women, not themselves. Three of them kept their doors locked. Except: when they went out to cut flowers. When they cleaned up the patio. When they talked over the back fence to one of the other wives. When they were lying around the pool. Sometimes they remembered to lock the doors when they went back in the house. Sometimes not.

But the men talked about how to teach them a lesson they'd never forget. Let one scream come out of Marge, and they'd never forget again. After the scream, unmask, give Marge a drink and tell her, "Now will you remember to lock your doors?" She might be good and mad, but on the other hand, it might save her life. Because after all, out of the eighteen victims, hadn't the rapist killed the two who had resisted? From then on, no one ever resisted.

So all of them felt that they were about to save Marge's life.

...They drew straws. Short straw won. No one knew who had it. The one who had drawn it was pledged to scare Marge out of what sense she had. No hanky-panky. Just a good scare.

Tomorrow morning.

*Sunday Evening*

IT WAS LATE in the afternoon, and Marge and her husband were sitting at a little white wrought-iron table near the pool, each with a tall glass in hand. Iced tea: tomorrow was Monday and the wits must be keen for the day's work. However, they were now undergoing the aftermath of the aftermath of the party the night before, namely: depression. They were sitting quietly, as the sun cast its cooling shadows over the pool and the soft green trees and bushes that grew against the fence, a patch of lawn at one end where an occasional English daisy provided a spot of color. Roses bloomed abundantly at the other end. (After tomorrow, Margery could never bear the sight of a rose again.) The air was sweet and still, for once no neighbor children shrieking in the pools nearby, no parents calling to them; occasionally a dog would bark and the local mocking bird would call out its strident, misleading songs of larks and robins and even a chicken or two.

"That bird," said Rod at last. "I swear it's been listening to the cats around here. Sometimes it sounds just like them."

Silence drifted down between them, once more, like a dark and smothering blanket.

Margery spoke at last. She said, "Rod, it's no good unless you do something yourself.

Go to a doctor, anything —"

"A shrink, I suppose you mean!" He crashed down his glass of tea, rose and said, "This slop is enough to tarnish one's insides." He moved over to the portable bar and poured himself a stiff whiskey and soda.

"That won't settle the problem," said his wife. "You'll feel like hell in the morning."

"I feel like hell every morning," he muttered, swallowed his drink and poured another. "And what's more, this is my last one today in case you're getting ready to bear down again."

"You wouldn't have to drink so much if you'd —"

"If I'd what?" he said wildly.

"Go to some goddamned quack and pour out my guts to him while he goes over me with a fine tooth comb and finds nothing the matter with me? Go to a shrink and tell him what my mother did to me when I was six months old or whatever? What the hell good is that going to do me?"

"It might," she said, her lips tight but her eyes compassionate. "Rod, what is it? Why can't you —"

"How the hell do I know?"

"Then find out!" she spat at him. "It's been months now, and no more between us than if we were brother and sister. My God, I'm only twenty-eight years old and this is supposed to be a marriage. Oh, I know — I suppose — that it isn't your

fault but if you'd only *do* something about it. Try. Do anything or — "

"I suppose you mean 'or you'll do something yourself,' like latching onto that fool Don across the street, or Joe who drools every time he looks at you — "

"If he does, he knows it's only because I'm unavailable."

"You are?" said her husband. He was standing up now, drink in hand, staring at the smooth blue of the swimming pool that now and then showed streaks of gold from the dying sun. "And for how long?"

"Not forever," she said quietly. "Only until you have done something about it. *Why don't you?*"

"Shut up," he said, just as quietly. "Shut up!"

"Is it because you no longer care about me?" she asked, her thoughts going back to earlier days of their passionate love-making, swearing to each other that they would be true forever. True. Marge began to wonder. Was that why — ? Some other woman? No. An adulterer can always manage his wife at the same time. But why wouldn't he go to a doctor?"

"Oh, for God's sake," he said in disgust. "That's what women always say when anything goes wrong — "

"Anything?" she said, "Is that what you call your problem? Just anything?"

"Let me alone!" he finally

yelled, at the end of his patience. "Just shut up and let me along!"

He flung himself into the house, and Marge sat on, out in the darkling dusk, quite alone. She shivered. Alone. A sad word.

ACROSS THE STREET, Phyllis busied herself with preparations for supper, while her husband propped himself up with *Playboy* and a long slow scotch and soda. "What a day," he said. "How d' you like this neighborhood, Phyl? Still sorry we left Torrance?"

She smiled slightly, a smile of coming conquest, a smile not for her husband. "Oh, fine," she said. "Nice people."

"Yeah. And how do you like the women?"

"The women? Oh Don, cut it out. Do you still think all I'm interested in is men?"

"What else?" and he went back to his magazine while his wife moved around beyond him in the open kitchen with the counter where they ate (too much trouble to set the table, she told him when he complained). Almost anything was too much trouble for Phyllis except to count the scalps on her belt. And now there was that stunning guy across the street and his half-witted little wife Marge — *that* one would be a cinch.

"How about some fondue for supper?" she said.

"Scrap it. A steak would



set better."

"A steak," she said pensively. "There's only one left in the freezer and no time for defrosting. You know, Don, if I'd mentioned steak you'd have said fondue, so I think we'll just have some scrambled eggs... And how about you? And all the charming suburban wives? Which one do you favor at the moment?"

"I favor no wives," he retorted. "Just well-stacked dames. And the ones around here don't take my fancy."

"Ha," she said. She scrambled their eggs in silence; they ate in silence. Her thoughts were on her newest conquest, and so were his.

NEXT DOOR to Rodney and Margery, Doris was setting the table and calling to the kids to come in and get cleaned up. "Hey, sport," she said to her husband, who was making out checks to pay bills that had been accumulating for weeks, "You set for supper?"

"Always," he murmured, scribbling away at his checkbook. "Hey, come here a minute, will you?"

She came and he put his free arm around her waist, patted her fanny and said, "You know, the more we visit around, the better I like it right here at home."

"Glad to hear that," she said, and dropped a kiss on the top of his head. "Honey, let's make

another baby tonight, hm?"

He screamed. "Are you out of your mind, woman? With me making out thousands of dollars of checks for everything under the sun? And new babies costing millions of dollars to bring into the world — with their first breath, yet — and always getting braces on their teeth or their arms broken. Your timing is lousy."

She laughed. "You know something, Dan? I really like you. Even if you do have a lust for li'l old Marge next door."

His hand paused for an infinitesimal second over the check he was writing for Jimmy's dentist (*This bill is three months overdue. Please remit*), then went on with his writing. "Don't be a dope," he said. "You're good enough for me."

"Gee, thanks," she commented dryly, and yelled at the kids once more to come in and get washed.

ALLISON CALLED out the back door, "Joe will you please take out the garbage?"

He said, "Can't hear you," and went on tinkering with his car. *Damned fuel line. Damned points. Damned fouled-up carburetor. Why can't Allison take it to the shop when I tell her to? Always rubbering around to see what the neighbors are doing.*

"Joe, please?"

"Well, for God's sake, if you'd quit nagging me all the time I'd take out the lousy garbage pails. I was going to but you yak, yak, yak all the time, so they can go to hell as far as I'm concerned."

"Did it ever occur to you that if you'd take out the garbage pails the first time I ask you — or even before — I wouldn't have to nag you? Every blasted thing in this place falling apart and can I get you to fix it? You always say you will and I have to ask you a dozen times and then you claim I'm nagging. Just do it, for once in your life. After all, you don't have to nag me to get dinner every night in the week, but maybe I'll let you, so you can see what it's like —"

"I know what it's like," he muttered. "Just don't be giving me any lessons in what it's like to be nagged to death."

"Okay," she said. She stepped back into the kitchen, turned off all the burners, and sat down in the living room with a book in her hands. After a moment her husband came in, saw the un-set table, the un-cooking dinner and his wife relaxing at her ease. "When's dinner?" he asked.

"Dinner?" she said innocently, looking up at him. Swearing, he went back outside and took the garbage out. He glanced over the fence at where Marge and Rod were sipping tall drinks by the pool. *Nice dame*, he

thought. *Never hear her yelling at her husband.* He leaned against the side of the house for a moment. *Why do I yen for her?* he asked himself wonderingly. *Just because she's nice, I guess*, he decided. *Not like that little twit across the street, always on the make. I wonder how Marge would be — ? No. No way. Oh well.* He plodded into the house, where his wife was now busy with dinner.

"Smells good," he commented, sniffing.

"Is," she said, and gave him a quick kiss. "Dinner fit for a garbage man. Drink? No? Me either. Who needs any more luses around this neighborhood?"

They sat down to dinner together, and ate in silence. His thoughts were next door, with Marge.

...THREE of these men were wondering who had drawn the fourth straw.

### *Monday Morning*

THE NEW DAY was beautiful, the air crisp and fresh, clean before the aging and heating of the hours ahead, birds frolicking in the birdbath down by the rose garden, the sky awash with blue freshness.

Marge, glancing out the patio doors, devouring the outdoor loveliness in gulps, thought,

*Soon as I clean up the kitchen I'll go out and pick some roses for the house. And then, smiling, latched the door. Rod'll be real proud of me when he sees I've remembered to lock things up.* She rushed to the front door. Yes, that was latched, too. She felt barricaded, she hated it, but at the same time, perhaps if she tried harder to make things just the way Rod wanted them, he might get over his problem. No, she was thinking unhappily at this point, *it'll take more than that ... Why won't he do something — ?* Oh well, the whole lovely day was ahead, and she wasn't going to worry about such things now.

She straightened up the kitchen, put away the things in the dishwasher, cleaned the sink, then picked up her flower basket and sallied forth to the patio and the lovely floribunda roses; the China Dolls, the lovely apricot-tinted buds of Mojave, the pale pink delicate ones of Perfume Delight, the gorgeous red of the Charlotte Armstrongs, even a few of the white ones she didn't care too much for. She had turned her mind off. Too lovely a day for anything but tasting, too beautiful to get lost in either the past or the future.

She was brought back to reality by the sudden, muted sound of the telephone inside. *Why, why does it always ring when I'm out here?* She flew into the house

because it might be something exciting, she mustn't miss it; and found that it was indeed something exciting: her mother calling from New York.

"Darling, everything is all right here, I just got kind of lonesome all of a sudden, was thinking about you and wondering if there's any chance of a little Rodney on the way..."

Marge tried to laugh. "You'd be the first to know, Mama. Rod isn't quite ready yet and I guess neither is junior, for that matter." Or perhaps never, she thought, remembering the problem.

Finally she said, "Mama, this must be costing you a fortune, I'll write you a nice long letter — it was so good hearing from you... Bye now."

And she hung up the phone and started out to the living room and noticed immediately that the patio doors were closed. Something cold touched her. She knew that she had run in from the patio, she knew now that she had left the doors open in her hurry, she knew they should not be closed now. All in a flash. Then she saw the figure standing in a corner like a statue: medium tall, garbed entirely in black — shoes, pants, turtle neck sweater, gloves, ski mask. He didn't speak. She stood frozen. She could not scream. Her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. Her throat closed up.

The figure, still not speaking, beckoned her toward the hall that led to the bedrooms. Still unable to speak, to scream, to plead, all she could do was to stand there and shake her head. At last, the whimper came forth: "No...no..."

Before she could blink again, there was a flash in the air, a knife gleaming in the morning sunlight, pointing at her, then pointing toward the hallway. She glanced around wildly, still unable to scream. And to what purpose? She could hear the kids at Doris' place shouting and yelling in the pool; she knew Allison had gone off to her job at the boutique. She knew, too, that the two victims who had resisted had been murdered. With that wicked-looking knife.

Slowly, still hoping for a miracle to pass, she moved, step by step, down the hallway, whimpering, whimpering. There was no sound behind her, but she knew he was there. Step by step into the bedroom where she and Rod had spent so many happy, and then so many frustrated nights. She knew that she would never be able to sleep in this room again.

SHE WAS BRUISED and shocked, outraged at the violation of her spirit as well as her body, sick not with shame for she had had no voluntary part in the perpetration of what had happened to her, but with outrage at vio-

lation, the taking of something that had belonged to her to give... Sick with knowledge of who the rapist was.

The man in black was gone now, as silently as he had come (totally evil as he had held his knife at her throat while he forced outrage on her); and she moved slowly painfully down the hall. She knew now what it felt like to be old and feeble, barely able to move, looking back over her short past as if it had been a hundred years behind her. Still slowly, she moved into the kitchen. (How long ago had she straightened it up, how long ago had she cut the beautiful roses on the table, that had not even begun to fade yet, lying there as if nothing had happened in this house since they had been plucked. How long?)

She dialed the number she wanted, then sat there waiting, trembling with shock, whispering to herself, "But he couldn't, he wasn't able to," and then remembered having read that sometimes impotent men could only perform by force.

*"Police station," said the telephone.*

She knew, appallingly, that the Southside Rapist would be home as usual from his office that evening. Waiting for dinner. Drinking his martini. Reading the paper. And asking her if she had remembered to lock the doors that morning...

# The World of Dipsy Dooley

By T.A. Meeks

Well, he was a criminal, in his own way . . . If O. Henry were alive today, he'd like this story.

AS HE APPROACHED the front entrance of O'Grady's Steak House, Dooley's momentum began to slacken by degrees. While he dawdled, an occasional soggy snowflake began drifting down out of a hostile cloud cover as if reluctant to join the muck in the gutter. Dooley's digestive juices began rumbling in anticipation when, as he drew nearer O'Grady's, a faint but utterly tantalizing aroma crept into his nostrils.

Almost two years had elapsed since Dooley had accomplished his last scam in O'Grady's, and he knew the new owner's name was Finklestein. Undoubtedly there had been a complete change of waiters and the risk would be minimal. Besides, Dooley's system was almost foolproof, and his monthly gastronomical binge was now almost two weeks overdue. Still, there was always that remote possibility of a blunder, and his steps faltered.

Dipsy Dooley had become a practicing, professional bum at age twenty, and since early in his

career had enjoyed the distinction of being considered a classic pro by his colleagues. Having been overwhelmed at birth by the name Socrates Doppelganger Dooley, bestowed by a schoolmaster father with a sense of humor, the boy had developed into a nonconformist at a tender age.

When pressed for an explanation regarding the boy's name, the elder Dooley would simply point out that the puny infant had strongly resembled a doppelganger at birth. And as for the first name, Papa Dooley hoped fervently that his offspring would acquire a measure of wisdom as he matured.

By the time he reached twenty Dooley had lost both parents, and since he had absolutely refused a formal education after the tenth grade, his wisdom consisted exclusively of the art of existing without performing any type of work whatsoever. He had flowered from a ghostly-looking infant into a tall, thin young man with pale blue eyes and a perpetual stoop.

Even though it presented a

problem at times, he managed to keep his face cleanshaven and his scanty brown hair trimmed. For among the brotherhood Dooley held the unique distinction of being the most dapper, the best-dressed, the cleanest, the smartest, and the all-around most presentable bum in the city — a bum of whom they were all proud.

Of course, no self-respecting disciple of the muscatel was going to struggle with the name Socrates Doppelganger, and so it became simply Dipsy Dooley. And as he became firmly entrenched in the fraternity of the dispossessed, Dipsy's two obsessions were noised about, becoming almost a trademark of his eccentric personality.

"There are only two things really worth bucking for in this life," Dooley would tell anyone who cared to listen. "One is to keep your personal freedom and the other's to make a really big score somewhere along the road. None of this penny-ante stuff — I mean some real important dough."

It was because of his reluctance to engage in any really serious criminal activity that Dooley had, over the years, perfected his scam of the keys and at age forty he had refined his technique to the peak of perfection. There was only one drawback to the operation — it required an inexhaustible supply of keys. In fact, Dooley's habit of dipping into the gutter at sight of

a stray key had contributed to his nickname, Dipsy.

The day-to-day pattern of life for Dooley involved various settlement houses and rescue missions. These establishments furnished the framework of his economic structure, but when the watery soup and stale doughnuts became insufferable to his palate there was always the con of the keys.

The keys would provide a long, leisurely, and completely satisfying meal, including a good wine, at one of the upper-middle-class feeding places. And after such a repast Dooley always found the skimpy mattress at the mission house a little softer, a trifle less offensive to the nose — really quite comfortable.

Dooley could easily have been mistaken for sixty instead of his true age. His thinning, brownish hair was almost invisible, sloping upward at an abrupt angle from a forehead crisscrossed by a network of tiny wrinkles. Because his pale blue eyes were so small, his thin face appeared oversize and the high-bridged nose became almost a beak. Although his bony frame seemed to operate as a separate entity inside his clothes, he still managed to present an acceptable appearance. By some devious manipulation he seemed to receive the choicest items from the settlement house inventory of used apparel. He carefully maintained these articles, and when he

squared his drooping shoulders and strode with authority into a restaurant even the most skeptical of waiters accepted Dooley as an individual of some importance. But it all depended on an adequate supply of keys.

Dipsy first began collecting keys quite by accident. He had chanced to pick up a set lying in the gutter for which a reward was offered. It was only after he had returned the keys and collected the meager reward that the various possibilities inherent in key ownership began to materialize in Dooley's mind.

After formulating the plan in sketchy outline, Dooley lost no time in attempting a trial run, using a set of car keys he acquired by stealth from a used car lot.

Even the first operation was staged with some finesse and resulted in a superb dinner of choice viands including a fine wine, and Dooley was firmly hooked on the scam of the keys. But since there never seemed to be as many keys available as there were good restaurants on the North Side, he found it necessary to adopt a periodic schedule.

Obviously the number of keys he could find by sheer luck was limited; therefore Dooley expanded on this source by filching sets of keys from used car lots. He considered this action noncriminal in nature because he felt sure the lot always kept a spare set for each car.

Occasionally Dooley would be able to purloin the keys from an auto left unattended at a busy service station while the driver was engaged in the washroom. Then, when all else failed, there was Old Rosenfeld, who had a key machine in the back room of his pawnshop. The old man believed in Dooley's basic honesty and at times could be persuaded to allow him the use of the machine to run off a few duplicates. And since Dooley held his escapades with the restaurateurs to a monthly schedule he had, until recently, been able to maintain an adequate key inventory for the last fifteen years.

Then with no warning a series of improbable events had befallen Dooley in rapid succession and, up until a few minutes before he approached O'Grady's Steak House, he had been utterly keyless. This condition resulted from his not having found a single key during the last three months. Then Old Rosenfeld disposed of the pawnshop, and all car salesmen seemed to have developed eyes in the backs of their heads. Furthermore, it appeared no driver in the city was inclined to leave his vehicle unattended for a visit to the washroom.

Dooley was hungry and his spirits were at a low ebb. He shuffled along a side street in a shabby warehouse district, eyes ever-alert probing the gutter. There was a smell of snow in the air and the man realized that it



was already too dark to make scavenging profitable.

When his eye caught the dull glimmer of metal from the gutter beside the delivery van, Dooley threw a quick glance in both directions. The van was the only vehicle on the street, parked midway between two corner street lights, and not a living creature moved within Dooley's range of vision. With scarcely a break in his stride he scooped up the car keys and moved up the street, not hurrying, not slackening, just holding his usual steady pace until he was well away from the vicinity. In less than ten minutes he had entered a more respectable neighborhood.

WHEN DOOLEY PUSHED OPEN the brass-studded door to O'-Grady's Steak House and stepped into the warm, food-scented atmosphere his metamorphosis was already complete. No longer was he an exceptionally well-dressed bum. He was, instead, a man of affairs who knew exactly what he wanted and intended to get it. He glanced at the approaching waiter with no apparent interest and indicated a small, select table near the window with a nod of the head.

Dipsy Dooley knew how to order good food and he knew how to consume this food in astonishing quantities. His waiter became more and more mystified by the man's capacity, and by the time Dooley's bottle of excellent wine

had vanished the waiter began to doubt the number of items on the tab. But the moment of truth inevitably arrived when the waiter presented the bill. An expression of utter amazement began to spread over the diner's face while his hands moved from pocket to pocket in a vain search.

"By George, my good man," Dooley spoke with just the proper shade of vexation, "I must have overlooked my wallet when I changed clothes. How stupid of me."

The waiter bristled instantly, his face registering both skepticism and hostility. "You better go talk to the boss," he said with a jerk of his head toward the cashier's cage.

Dooley rose, slowly and with dignity, and plunging a hand into his side pocket produced a set of car keys. "Look, my good man," he said, staring the waiter directly in the eye, "I have a brother-in-law who owns a pawnshop a few blocks from here. You keep my car keys for security and I'll walk over and borrow sufficient money to pay my bill. And I won't forget your kindness when I return."

"Well, I don't know." The waiter was wavering but not convinced.

"Don't be ridiculous." Dooley's voice was becoming sharper. "What sort of a fool would I be to leave my car parked out yonder in this snowstorm and walk home?"

"Okay," the waiter murmured unhappily, "but how long will you be gone?"

"Shouldn't take me over fifteen minutes at most," Dooley replied. And he moved toward the front door with the deliberate gait of a man who has fed well and has no pressing matter on his mind.

The snow was swirling down with a new urgency, but Dooley was humming softly to himself while trudging along the shortest route toward the lumpy mattress of the mission house.

Latecomers were always relegated to the older beds in the rear, but this indignity was trivial to Dooley after dinner at O'Grady's Steak House. He deposited his inflated stomach on a cot between two sleepers who spouted fountains of muscatel-laced snores, and soon dropped off into a peaceful slumber.

WHEN DETECTIVE-SERGEANT Sullivan entered the coffee shop annex of O'Grady's Steak House the morning following Dooley's escapade, he found Finklestein a morose figure, sitting at the register staring down at a set of car keys in his palm.

"What's with the long face, Bernie?" The detective slid his bulk onto a stool and nodded at the waitress.

"I thought I'd been hit with all of them before now, Sully." The proprietor still inspected the keys, shaking his head with disbelief.

"But last night a con artist swindled one of my best boys. Left a tab of \$31.56 and all I've got is a set of lousy car keys and no car to put them in."

"Tough." The detective spoke with genuine sympathy and began to spoon his coffee thoughtfully.

Finklestein left his post and propped his elbows on the counter before Sullivan's hunched figure. With a gesture of bitterness he slapped the car keys violently on the counter top. "What'll you give me for them? They're for sale, cheap."

The detective glanced at the keys with only polite interest, but when the company name stamped into the metal activated a relay in his brain he dropped his spoon with a clatter. "Bernie, could I borrow these keys for a few days? I'll leave you a deposit if you want one."

The proprietor shrugged and held out his hands, palms up. "Be my guest, Sully. I'm not holding my breath till that bum comes back to pay his tab."

Detective Sullivan pocketed the keys and spun a quarter on the counter. "Okay if I drop in and question the waiter when he comes on shift? I'd like the best description we can get on this dude."

"Sure," Finklestein said, "but you don't have to go to all this trouble for me."

"No sweat." The detective was hurrying toward the door. "We

want to talk to this fellow about something beside defrauding an innkeeper."

Later in the day, after he had extracted a fairly good description of Dipsy Dooley from an embarrassed waiter, the detective hurried to Headquarters and put an APB on the air. And a few minutes after the pickup was broadcast Dooley happened to be sitting on a park bench engaged in a monologue conversation with a seedy individual who nursed something enclosed in a paper sack clutched between bony knees.

"No, sir," Dooley was observing, "I never touch a drop of the cheap stuff. When I drink wine it's the very best, but then wine never was very important to me, anyway."

The derelict beside Dooley squirmed uneasily and peered into the sack with some misgiving at the scanty amount remaining in the bottle.

"After all, there are only two really important things in this life," Dooley boomed on, sweeping over the lengthening shadows of the tiny, snow-covered park with an indulgent eye. "One is to make a real big score just once and the other is to stay footloose and fancy-free to enjoy roaming around. You know what I mean, Joey?"

"I guess so," Joey mumbled, prodded into speech by Dooley's vehemence.

At that moment both men became aware of the patrol car that was slowing down to a crawl in the nearby street. Dooley was on his feet and moving away before the car ground to a stop. Joey made two feeble attempts to rise and then sank back with a fatalistic motion of his shoulders.

"Hold it right there! You in the brown suit." The officer's words bounced off Dooley's ears like ricocheting bullets and stopped him in midstride.

By the time the officer had informed Dooley of his rights and placed him in the patrol car, his initial apprehension had begun to fade. After all, he reasoned, the only thing he was guilty of was conning a waiter out of a free meal, and Dooley knew that such an offense was considered minor in a city where violent crime was a way of life.

When Dooley was ushered into the little office and seated, Detective Sullivan looked up from behind his desk. He had been scanning a report while fingering a set of keys with a nervous reflex. The other officer left the room and Sullivan rose, approaching the seated figure, still dangling the keys from one finger.

"My name is Detective Sullivan. You told Officer Denver that your name is Socrates D. Dooley."

"That is correct," Dooley answered in a noncommittal tone, adding, "sir."

"What does the 'D' stand for?"

The detective was studying the other's face with expressionless eyes.

"You wouldn't believe it."

"Try me."

"The 'D' is for Doppelganger. My father was a scholar and he gave it to me at birth."

"What in hell sort of a name is that?" the detective asked.

"It means a ghostly image of a live person." Dooley was a little defensive. "I was pale and puny at birth, so they say."

Sullivan teetered on the balls of his feet, still staring at Dooley's face, still uncertain of the man's candor. "So your name is Socrates Doppelganger Dooley and you're an out-and-out professional bum, though a quite well-dressed one, I'd say."

"An unfortunate choice of terms, officer." Dooley was filled with resentment by the detective's statement. "I have been, sir, since age twenty, a student of humanity, and the city streets and parks serve as my campus. I have never once been booked for any violation of the law, though I may have, at times, been guilty of certain very minor infractions."

"Maybe you just ran out of luck." The detective placed the car keys in Dooley's hand. "Ever see these before?"

After examining the pair of keys with some interest the man returned them to the detective.

"I can't say for sure, sir. They look

like car keys and all car keys look an awful lot alike."

"Don't be cute," the detective said, returning to his desk. "Isn't it true that you used these very keys to con a waiter at O'Grady's Steak House out of a good meal last evening?"

Dooley shifted unhappily, then looked his inquisitor squarely in the eye. "I won't lie to you. Yes, I did dine last evening at O'Grady's and I did employ a set of car keys to assist me, but I can't say if those are the same keys or not."

"Now we're getting somewhere," Detective Sullivan said. "And since you don't own a car, where did you get the keys you used at O'Grady's?"

"I found them in the gutter alongside a delivery truck on a little side street between Rampart and Division."

"When?"

"Just before I went into O'Grady's. Must have been around six and it was just beginning to snow a little."

"And you're sure you don't know anything about the van?"

"Of course not."

The telephone burred insistently, and after receiving a brief message Sullivan cradled the instrument and stared at Dooley with a new expression. "You're telling the truth," he said. "You've never been booked before."

"Like I told you, officer, I'm a student of humanity and cer-

tainly not a common, everyday, run-of-the-mill bum." Dooley's thin shoulders twitched with controlled outrage, but his faded blue eyes met the detective's without wavering.

"Dooley, strangely enough, I believe your story and I'm letting you go with only one demand. You must go to O'Grady's, confess to Bernie Finklestein, and work off your debt, and if I ever hear of you conning another waiter I'll throw the book at you. And before you go I suppose I owe you some sort of explanation."

WHEN DOOLEY WAS STILL three blocks away from O'Grady's Steak House the snow once again began to sift down out of a black sky. He had spent the hours since his release from Detective Sullivan's custody sitting alone on a park bench, crushed and defeated in body and soul, and now the hour was quite late.

If only the detective had not told him the circumstances that had occasioned his round of questioning. But now he knew the whole story of how the van, standing deserted on the dark street, had been used only two hours before by a gang in a payroll robbery in which a guard had been gunned down. Then, after a hot chase, the police had lost the van amid a maze of streets in the warehouse district and the robbers had parked the vehicle, fleeing on foot, intending to

return later.

"They must have been so panicky the driver dropped the keys without knowing it," the detective had observed, "and you just happened to stumble onto them."

"But the real kicker is that one key opened the rear door, and just inside, covered by an old blanket, was 635,000 dollars in small bills. Yet you traded these keys for a \$31.56 meal. Since we didn't spot the van until 6:30 you would have had about a half-hour to help yourself to a fortune." The detective had given Dooley a sardonic grin and reminded him he was free to go.

The fragrance of charcoal-broiled steak grew stronger and stronger, filtering through the falling snow to creep into Dooley's nostrils, sending spasms of instinctive craving flowing through his nerve fibers. Would he ever again be able to sit down and devour one of those steaks? The prospect was doubtful, and once again the thought hammered through his brain. With only two paramount aims in life, he had bungled one and would never get another chance.

He had missed the big score. All that remained was his freedom, and he must not take any chances with that.

Dooley pushed open the brass-studded door and walked resolutely but with drooping shoulders toward Bernie Finklestein.

# Johnny Ninety

By Dick Stodghill



There was a frightening fifteen-month gap completely gone from his life. But finding out what had happened to those months proved worse than not knowing!

IT WASN'T MUCH of a ski slope, not to someone accustomed to spending winter weekends at Whiteface Mountain or Killington. It was outdoors, though, and that's what mattered, that was all he really wanted. That and a chance to be alone, feel the wind in his face, give it a chance to clear the smoke, the stale air, the jaded thoughts from his mind.

One run down the easy main slope was enough for Clary, but he wasn't ready to go inside. A bar stool in the lodge held no appeal, not yet anyway, and the special bus wouldn't make its next trip back to Cleveland for another hour, so he jumped aboard the chair lift and rode to the top again.

Beginner and intermediate

slopes, hazy under bright floodlights, were off to his left. He wanted no part of them or the noisy, laughing people using them. People — he'd had more than enough of people for one day. For many days, in fact.

Business, too. He'd had enough of that for a while. Long meetings in musty hotel conference rooms. The never-ending problems to be tackled, thrashed out and solved when he was home in Albany. The irritation with David Boylen, the wondering when he'd begin holding up his end of the partnership.

For what? The question arose in his mind almost daily now. For more money? Maybe. It once had been the most important thing in the world to him. At the begin-

ning it was the thought of the things it could buy, the things it would enable him to do. Then, somewhere along the way, it became just the earning of it, the raking it in, that satisfied him. Now he wasn't sure what it was, not since that day three months ago. His birthday. His thirtieth.

It was just another day, of course. He'd stopped looking forward to birthdays years ago. Something about this one was different, though. He was uneasy from the time he got up in the morning, couldn't concentrate on business, wasn't anticipating the evening with pleasure, not even the small party Dorene had planned. It was a clear, crisp October day, the kind that always made him wish it was Saturday and a good football game was around.

He had gotten up suddenly, right in the middle of a conference, left the office and walked the streets nearly three hours. Was this it? At the age of thirty was he locked into a routine for life? Why? For more money to buy things he didn't really care about? More money to feed a marriage that long since had become boring to both parties? More money just so he could make more money and more and more and more?

He went back. He always did. For a while he had toyed with the idea of not doing so but he went back, back without the answers. But since then the questions kept

intruding on his thoughts more and more often.

*The hell with all that*, he thought, easing off the chair lift and gliding across the hard-packed snow. No reason to go right back down again — he'd explore a little. Not that there was all that much territory to explore. The top of the hill was level and cleared of trees for a good hundred yards to the North. To the West and South were the slopes — something to avoid — and to the East the dark outline of a woods.

He headed north and quickly covered the length of the clearing. Looking down he could see the headlights of cars on an interstate highway and in the distance the gray expanse he knew was Lake Erie. He stood there a few moments, watching the lights and listening to the wind moaning in the treetops to his right. Then he began moving again, this time toward the trees.

He skirted the edge of the woods, tempted to push on in and lose himself in its loneliness, leave so-called civilization behind for a while. He didn't. He never gave in to such impulses. Maybe that was the trouble.

He continued south until the trees became sparse as he neared the lights of the main slope. There he found a gentle descent, the same as that of the main slope but a route that wove downward among the scattered oaks, maples and firs. Again he was tempted.



Why not glide down the incline alone through the trees rather than on the garish, crowded slope? It was light enough — no problem there. Easy, too, for anyone other than a rank beginner. He shouldn't, but for once he was going to yield to an impulse, be unconventional. He pushed off.

It was a smooth trip down, weaving in and out among the widely spaced trees with just enough speed to make it exciting, satisfying. A phantom bobbing back and forth, silently moving along without disturbing nature's solitude.

The ravine was twenty feet deep and twenty-five feet across. The gentle rises and depressions hid it from him, concealed it until he was right on top of it. There was nothing he could do, nothing but glide off the edge and sail almost majestically through the air. He wasn't going fast enough to clear it; not even close. He was aware of dropping at the same time momentum carried him forward and then was conscious of a brilliant burst of gold and silver. Then nothing.

## II

HE WAS DISORIENTED, confused. Heavy fog, more like dense clouds, surrounded him, cut him off from everything. He was lying on his back, aware of pain in his right arm and shoulder. His head hurt, too, so he raised his left hand

to try to brush the swirling white mist from his eyes. For a moment it receded but then closed in again. He repeated the move several times and each time the mist seemed to clear a little until, with a start, he realized two white-robed, ghostly figures were hovering beyond his feet.

He closed his eyes, thought about it. Small evergreens, probably, covered with snow. When he was fully awake he'd be able to see them clearly. He kept his eyes closed, deliberately counted to one hundred, and opened them again. The mist was still there and so were the apparitions. As he watched, one slowly drifted away but returned in a moment with a third, taller figure also draped in white. He shut his eyes again as the tallest of the menacing forms left the other two and moved closer.

When he opened them once more the fog was almost gone. Clary sighed, aware now that he was lying in a bed and the frightening figures were nothing more than a doctor and two nurses. The doctor, bending over him and smiling, said, "Feeling better?"

Clary nodded a little. Better than what?

The doctor, straightening up, said, "Rest a while longer and then I'll be back." Clary started to protest, but the mist began closing in again so he didn't care.

Bright sunshine flooded the room when he awoke. The pain

was still there but the mist was gone and his head felt better. He remembered the run down the uncharted slope and swore softly to himself. What a stupid thing to do. The sun was high. It must be close to noon, and his conference was to have resumed at nine. He needed a telephone, saw one but it was out of reach and when he tried to move the pain intensified. He found a call button and pushed it.

A nurse opened the door, smiled and said, "Be right with you." She shut the door again but returned in a few minutes with the doctor and an older woman dressed in street clothes.

"Well, you look much better," the doctor said. "It's nothing too serious, so don't be concerned. Your arm and collarbone are broken and you suffered a concussion, but you'll be back on your feet in no time."

"I have to use the phone," Clary said, "and has my wife been notified?"

The older woman moved closer, said, "We have a problem there. You had no identification when you were admitted."

"Damn!" Clary said. "That's right, I left everything in a locker at the ski lodge."

The woman's eyebrows lifted, and the doctor looked puzzled. "Ski lodge?" he said. "In Galveston?"

"Galveston?" Clary echoed. What was the man talking about? He'd never been in Galveston in

his life. Never been in Texas. If he was joking, it was a poor time and place. "What day is this?" he asked.

"Friday," the doctor and the woman said in unison.

"Friday?" Clary repeated, shaking his head. "It was Monday night. You mean I've been out three days?"

The doctor and woman looked at each other. She turned back to Clary and said, "No, you were brought in last evening about eight. I don't know what this is about a ski lodge, you were hit by a car, but there are a few matters we have to straighten out. We need your name and address and have to know how the bill will be paid."

Clary's transition from confusion to anger was swift. "My name's Mitchell Clary," he snarled. "I live in Albany and don't worry about your damn money, you'll be paid. Now I want that telephone moved over here and I want some privacy!"

His bravado faded when he was alone. A lead ball was forming in the pit of his stomach. Where was he, really? What was going on? He was too tired, too confused to cope with it. He stared blankly at the wall a few minutes, the lead ball continuing to grow. Was he still out, caught up in some sort of crazy dream? He reached for the phone, hesitated, afraid to proceed, but finally began pressing buttons.

"Dorene?" he said when the woman answered. There was no response so he repeated, "Dorene?"

"Who is this?" the voice was wary, suspicious.

"It's me, Mitch."

She gasped, and her voice quivered when she said, "Mitch? Is this supposed to be a joke? If it is, it isn't funny."

"For God's sake, Dorene, what's the matter? I haven't called for a few days, but there's been a good reason."

Her laugh was almost hysterical. "It really is you, Mitch, isn't it? You drop off the end of the earth for fifteen months and then say it's been a few days. That's pretty far out, Mitch, even for you."

"Damn it, Dorene," he said, irritated again, "I'm in no mood for games. I've had an accident and guess I'm still groggy. What's happened about the meeting? Have you heard anything?"

"What meeting?"

"The Cleveland meeting! Did David fly down and take over for me? Who's handling the business?"

There was a long pause, and her voice was shaky again when she said, "Mitch, there is no business. I don't understand this at all. David sold the business, or what was left of it, six months ago."

He let the phone fall to his

side. It was crackling, still, but he didn't hear it. After a few moments he dropped the receiver on the hook. *My God*, he thought, *what's happening?* This was no dream. No. it was a nightmare. A weird, incomprehensible nightmare.

### III

THE WIND OFF THE LAKE slammed the door behind him, shoving him toward the lobby. He wasn't ready to go there so he braced his legs, turned left into the taproom. Cleveland, he decided as he climbed onto a stool, wasn't his favorite city. Apparently the city wasn't too fond of him, either. Oh well, his calls were completed and he'd be leaving in the morning.

He took a healthy swig from the glass the bartender had placed before him, filled a knobby Savinelli from a roll-up pouch, struck a match and held the flame over the bowl, drawing it in with short, jerky puffs. He sat back, savoring the flavor of the tobacco, the warmth of the room, the first glow of the drink.

Mitch Clary was content. He had wondered about it, his first trip back to Cleveland since the accident. It hadn't bothered him, not at all. As for the rest of it, he certainly felt no sorrow because of the drastic changes in his life in the two years since his last visit. The nine months, really. At least that's what it was in his mind.

That was the only sour note, the one thing that bothered him. Not the loss of the business, certainly. Good riddance, he had become a slave to it. He was happier as a manufacturer's representative. Let someone else have the headaches. And not the divorce, either. He didn't regret that any more than Dorene did. So he walked away from it with little more than the clothes on his back, so what? Starting over again, beginning with new, more modest goals, had been exciting, a thrill he still felt after six months. Money didn't matter, just so he had enough to get by on.

No, it was none of that. The thing that bothered him was the fifteen-month gap in his life, the period erased from his mind the way writing vanishes when a wet cloth is run across a chalkboard. It still seemed unreal, something that wouldn't happen in real life. Not his life, anyway. He had tried for awhile, followed the advice of the doctors, took drugs, underwent hypnosis, all the rest of it. It hadn't helped, so he walked away from it, quit trying. Maybe it would come back in its own time. Maybe it wouldn't.

The lack of identification puzzled him at first. He could understand it when he was on the ski slope, but why would he be walking the streets of a strange city more than a year later without any? The other man, the one who had taken over his mind and body

for a while, had been well-groomed, attired in expensive clothing, not some drifter who stepped into the path of a car and was left lying when it sped away.

The police report provided the answer. Two witnesses saw the first man to reach him pinch his wallet and sprint away. If that hadn't happened there'd be no mystery. Something in the wallet would have fanned a spark that would have brought it all back.

He thought it would, anyway. He signalled for another drink, relit his pipe and mulled it over for the thousandth time. Did he really want it to come back now? He wasn't sure. Maybe there was something about that other man he'd rather not know. It frightened him sometimes, knowing a total stranger shared his body. He had thought something in Cleveland might strike the right chord and make it all come rushing back. It hadn't, and now he'd leave in the morning. A day in Akron and another in Pittsburgh and he'd return home. He'd never been in either city, so maybe when he left Cleveland behind he might, at last, leave the stranger behind, too.

#### IV

CLARY TOSSED his suitcase in the trunk, pulled out of the hotel garage, drove a few blocks to the Interstate 77 ramp and headed south. The sun was a hazy yellow ball, a loser in its battle to cut

through the murk blanketing the steel mills, the desolate neighborhoods of decrepit buildings and ramshackle houses he passed through. It finally won out when he left the city behind and drove through low, rolling hills to the Ohio Turnpike, took it east to the next exit and continued toward Akron on Route 8.

It had clouded over by the time he saw the needle-like tower looking like some giant lighthouse in the sky. The Cathedral of Tomorrow, he thought, so he was almost there. He had traveled another hundred yards when it hit him, chilled him like a dash of ice water in the face. How had he known it was the tower at the cathedral? It wasn't in Akron, really, it was in Cuyahoga Falls, and he knew that, too. But how? He had never been there.

For an instant he believed he had it. Telecasts from the cathedral went everywhere. He must have seen one, seen the tower, stored it away somewhere. But no, that couldn't be it. He had never watched Rex Humbard's program, he was sure of that.

There was more by then, anyway. It was a frightening feeling, somehow knowing that just ahead he'd make a sweeping curve to the right, swing back left down into a small valley and then up again to find the cathedral on his right and a shopping complex on his left. He drove it exactly as he knew he would, the lead ball he'd

had in his stomach nine months ago coming back again, growing steadily larger.

He wheeled into the lot of a small, boxlike restaurant a few blocks south of the cathedral, went inside, ordered coffee and lit a cigarette. He inhaled deeply, let the smoke trickle out through his nose, took a drink of the strong, dark brew.

"You've come home," he said to himself, to the hazy shadow sharing his body. *But who are you? I still don't know.* He chuckled aloud and the counterman turned, stared at him. Now, he realized, Mitch Clary was the stranger. The other man was on familiar ground, not him. He didn't know where he was, but the other man did. He would take over now. Maybe a man would walk through the door and say hello or a woman would rush up and throw her arms around him. Not around Mitch Clary, around the other man. But who was he? A shiver traveled along Clary's spine and his palms and upper lip were clammy. He was afraid. More so than he could ever remember being.

His business, his one call, was completed in an hour. Drive right on to Pittsburgh, he told himself, spend the night there, get away from this place. Everything was familiar in an eerie, uncomfortable way. Kind of like watching a travelogue over and over until the streets, the buildings were as

recognizable as those at home. He knew the city and yet it was totally impersonal. Like suddenly dropping into some weird science-fiction story, like walking through a dream world.

No, he couldn't leave like that. It would haunt him always, dominate his thoughts, eventually lure him back again. He had to at least try to unravel the tangled mess in his mind. It wasn't noon yet, so he would devote the rest of the day and evening to it. Then, if nothing happened, he would be able to live with it, know he had done everything he could.

He wasn't hungry — the lead weight had taken over his stomach — but he forced himself to eat a sandwich and then aimlessly drove the streets. He didn't know what he was looking for, not really. A building, maybe, or a house or a store. Anything that would remove it from the abstract, give it life, body, meaning.

Again he was frustrated. After several hours he stopped for coffee, sat quietly and tried to let his mind drift where it wanted, uncontrolled. Maybe it would slip into some channel he couldn't find through conscious effort. It worked, to a point. Aside from a few main streets most of the neighborhoods were strange, unfamiliar, but something about the east side of the city was pulling on him, drawing his thoughts back as though by magnetism. The big clock in the tower at the Goodyear

plant, the bank facing him at an angle where the boulevard took off to the Northeast, the shabby business blocks, the expressway above street level in front of the General Tire factory, the road that led south to the airport. Even the Rubber Bowl, Derby Downs and the huge dirigible hangar, a haunting reminder of an era long past.

Clary checked into a motel just east of downtown near the university. He freshened up, had a drink in the lounge, and then drove again to East Akron. Another hour of cruising accomplished nothing so he stopped at a restaurant on Market Street and ate dinner.

A cold, misty rain was falling when he stepped outside. He drove a few blocks west, parked again and began walking, his coat collar turned up against the rain but his head unprotected. The moisture created a spectral halo around each street light, every neon sign, adding to the loneliness, the apprehension inside him. So did the singing from the street as the tires of passing cars squeezed the wetness from the pavement. The few pedestrians hurried along, heads down, passing him without acknowledging his existence.

Nothing was open but the taverns, dreary workingmen's bars like those in any industrial area. Unhappy places, one not much different than another, as

though the clientele brought the monotony of their jobs along with them. Clary entered one at random, found a dozen men seated at a long bar in the gloom. No one looked up when the opening door broke the silence. No one cared if he came in, cared if he stayed or not, so after a few seconds he turned and left.

He was discouraged, ready to give up. He had tried, hadn't he? What more was there to do? He crossed the street, headed back toward his car, walked east past the old plant and newer offices of Goodyear. After several blocks he could see his car and across from it, on his side of the street, another tavern, a cafe, larger than those nearer the factory behind him. It was on a corner, its double wooden doors angled so the entry faced both streets. A pair of globed lights flanked the doors, two yellow eyes drawing him to them.

A faded red arrow was painted above the doors and that, he knew, was the name of the place: The Red Arrow. He knew, too, what he'd find beyond the doors. A cigarette machine and jukebox along the right wall and then a bar that curved and ran the length of the wall facing the door, ending when it came to other doors leading to the kitchen and rest-rooms. Booths lining both walls to the left, a small dance floor and tables with checkered cloths in the open area.

They couldn't tell, those already inside, that his heart was pounding, his breathing all out of kilter because someone had shoved the lead ball up from his stomach to the spot where his throat met his chest. He tried to cover it up, appear at ease, nonchalant. He didn't look at anyone, not so their eyes met anyway, so he was unaware that three pairs of them zeroed in on his face and never wavered.

It was exactly as he pictured it, exactly as he knew it would be. Couples, with eyes only for each other, were at a few tables and in a few booths. Several men were clustered around a woman seated at the bar to his right and half a dozen more were scattered along the bar beyond the curve. The four stools at the left were empty, so he walked to them and slid onto the one second from the end. A girl was standing alone where the bar ended and the doorways began. He didn't look at her.

A drink was set before him. He didn't remember ordering it and started to say so when the bartender said, "Compliments of Arnie," and jerked his head to Clary's right.

He turned and looked. A tall, muscular, olive-skinned man stared back at him from cold eyes above a twisted grin. He nodded almost imperceptibly and Clary returned it, raised the glass and took a drink. When he looked again the man was reaching over



the bar for a telephone.

It was so damned irritating, so inexplicable. How could he know the place but not the faces? Why should inanimate objects have meaning, be familiar, but not the people? He lit a cigarette and, as he returned the lighter to his pocket, turned to his left. The girl was staring at him, stunned, shocked, as though he were some sort of apparition, the Ghost of Evenings Past.

## V

SHE WAS PRETTY. Not Hollywood beautiful, not artificial like something cast from a mold that turns out endless duplicates. Just pretty. Fresh, wholesome, different from girls you find standing alone at the end of bars. Except her eyes. They were beautiful. Even when rounded in shock they were beautiful. Brown eyes that given the chance would twinkle and dance, glow when they were looking at one special person.

"Hello, Johnny," she said, scarcely above a whisper. Her voice matched her eyes.

Now it was his turn to be stunned. Now he had a name, or part of one at least. Or that other person did, the one lurking inside, refusing to come out, amused by his discomfort and unwilling to take over for him, relieve him of the burden that was reaching the point of being intolerable.

His voice wouldn't work, not for

a few seconds. Finally he managed a hoarse, strained, "Hello," and lowered his eyes. When he looked again she was still staring, not shocked any more but hurt, bewildered.

Embarrassed, unsure of himself, he asked, "How are you?"

"I'm okay," she said, still softly, not meaning it. "How are you?"

"Fine," he lied. She had the answers for him, but he was afraid to ask the questions. He knew her, too, or did he? Maybe she was just the image every man carries around with him, the girl he never really meets, the one he thinks is out there somewhere when he's young but, as the years slip away, comes to realize is only a dream. They don't make them that way, not really, so he settles for an imitation.

He was angry with himself, knew he had to do something, had to quit acting like a high school sophomore. He nodded toward the tables, said "Would you care to sit down?" She nodded back and walked toward one near the front door, one where they would be alone, have privacy. He followed, saw that her slim, firm body was as appealing as her face.

They sat facing each other, ill at ease, neither speaking. At last, when he was getting desperate enough to comment on the weather just to break the silence, she said, "Why, Johnny? Why did

you come back? I was just getting over it, just getting better."

*I guess I deserve this*, he thought. It's the kind of thing you should expect when you start opening locked doors, poking around, releasing phantoms that are better left alone. He took a deep breath and began:

"Look, this may sound pretty stupid, but try to understand. I don't know who I am. What I mean is, I had an accident and can't remember. I'm not the man you know, the one you think I am. I was for a while but I'm not now." He stopped, exasperated because he couldn't better express himself. "See what I mean? I can't make myself clear, tell you what I'm trying to say so you'll understand."

She reached over and lightly touched his hand for an instant. "I understand, Johnny. That's the way you used to be, only now I guess you remember things that happened before you were here the first time. Right?"

"Right," he said. "Before and after, but not while I was here. Fifteen months of my life are just a blank."

"What about me?" she asked. The hurt look was back. "Do you remember me?"

Suddenly the words poured forth. He told her the story, or as much of it as he knew. When it ended he lit a cigarette, leaned toward her and said, "As for you, I remember you, I know I do, but

it's still locked up somewhere in my mind." He paused, groped for words, and not finding them, shrugged and said, "To be honest, I can't remember your name. Mine either, the one you know me by."

Tears had formed in her eyes, but she held them back. "I'm Lorna," she said, again barely above a whisper. "You and I, we were — " She hesitated, finally settled for, "We were pretty close. But, Johnny, you shouldn't have come back. Not here, of all places. Something will happen, I know it will."

"Like what?"

She glanced around the room apprehensively, almost furtively. Her eyes paused when they came to the man who had bought Clary's drink, leaning now against the bar and studiously avoiding looking in their direction, and again when they reached a second man standing beside the cigarette machine near the door.

"Johnny," she said, "they're going to kill you. Not here, they'll take you somewhere else, but that's what they're going to do, I know it."

Her words hit him like a hammer. He managed a self-conscious, humorless chuckle. "What are you talking about, kill me?" he said. "Who, those men you were looking at?"

She nodded. "Arnie Martine, the one who bought you the drink, and Ange Fiocca. They work for

Tony — Tony Barbano. So did you. You were one of his strong-arm men like they are. Tony's the one who found you wandering around dazed in the middle of the night along the interstate — I-90 up near Cleveland. That's how you got your name. Tony gave it to you — Johnny Ninety."

He repeated it. "Johnny Ninety. What did this Johnny Ninety do that makes you think they'll kill him?" He sounded like he was talking about someone else. He still was, in his own mind.

"You ran off with nearly \$200,000," she said. "You and Squints Hogan. They caught Squints but couldn't find you. They killed him. No one's ever said so, but I've overheard enough to piece it together."

"How did it happen? How did they — we — do it?"

"Tony sent you on a job. The two of you flew to Houston and were to rent a car there. I don't know the details, but you were to go to Brownsville. It's on the border, so I can guess what you were going to do. Anyhow, a couple of days after you left Tony was upset, furious. Ange and Arnie flew down there, were gone almost a week. They found Squints and got the money, but it was too late to complete the business deal. Squints never came back. Neither did you, but I knew they didn't find you. They didn't say so, but I could tell. None of

them ever mentioned your name again while I was around."

"How do you know all this?"

"I'm Tony's secretary, I run his construction company office. I don't know anything about the other part of his business — the part you were in — except what I overhear. On the books you were a construction supervisor, but that's not what you really were."

Thinking aloud, he said, "We must have gone to Galveston for the night for some reason. I probably went out for a walk — I like to after dinner — and got hit by a car. When I didn't come back, this Hogan decided to take off with the money. Apparently he didn't do a very good job of hiding. But if they got the money back, they know I didn't take it. Why would they want to kill me?"

"They think you were in on a double-cross, you and Squints. They don't forgive something like that, and you should know it, even if you can't remember."

He frowned, tried to think of a move. "Maybe," he said, "I should talk to this Tony."

"No," she said, eyes rounding in fear. "Tony looked on you as — well, almost like a son. I don't think the others ever trusted you, but Tony did. After what happened he thinks you let him down, betrayed him. Your only chance is to get out of here some way, go back to your other life, disappear again and never come back."

"If I do, what happens to you since you've been talking to me?"

She laughed a little. "I'll be okay. Tony treats me like a daughter and thought of you as a son, but he was hoping we'd get married."

The thought sobered her quickly. "Are you married, Johnny?"

"No," he said, "and call me Mitch, that's my name. I was married when I was here before but didn't know it. Now I'm divorced."

"Johnny —" She had already forgotten his instructions — "You've got to get out of here. Right away."

He thought about it, agreed with her. Still, he didn't want to leave her like that. What choice was there, though? "Okay," he said, "I think I can. You just sit quietly."

He got up, said, "Thanks," softly and walked toward the cigarette machine, fumbling in his pocket for change. The man — Ange — straightened as he approached, but Clary changed direction abruptly toward the bar, took a dollar bill from his wallet and asked the bartender for change. When he got it, he headed for the machine again, holding the money in his left palm and selecting the coins he wanted with his right hand.

When he reached the machine he bent over, ran his fingers along the buttons, found the right one

and pressed it. The pack came tumbling down into a chute near the bottom. He reached for it with his left hand. As he straightened up he aimed a swift, unexpected punch just above Ange's belt buckle. The man gasped, doubled over, and dropped to the floor. Clary bolted through the door.

Outside he stopped suddenly, jumped behind a brick facing to the left of the door. Within seconds Arnie Martine burst through the door, gun in hand, frantically looking in all directions. Before he realized where he was, Clary's knockout punch landed on his jaw. Clary sent the gun skidding over the sidewalk with his foot, sprinted across the street to his car, and pulled away with tires howling in protest.

He was at the motel in less than ten minutes. He parked in the crowded lot, hurried to his room, threw the few things he had unpacked into his suitcase, went to the desk and paid his bill. Outside again, he tossed the suitcase into the trunk, slammed the lid and climbed behind the wheel. He was fitting the key into the ignition when he felt the gun pressed against the back of his neck.

"That wasn't nice, Johnny," said a raspy voice behind him. "Running away like that just when I was ready to come in and see you after all this time. I might have missed you altogether if I got there half a minute later."

Fool, Clary thought. He hadn't

glanced in the rear-view mirror, not once, and hadn't thought of checking the back seat before he got in the car. He drove east again, as ordered, hands clammy, slippery on the wheel. Past the Red Arrow and then south toward the airport.

"Pull in here," said the man he knew was Tony, moving the gun slightly to the left as he spoke. It was a large, dark warehouse. Heavy equipment was parked outside and a sign read *Barbano Construction Company*.

Ange and Arnie were already there, waiting in a spacious, comfortable office. Clary was patted down and pushed onto a chair in front of a large mahogany desk. Tony walked behind it, sat down and lit a cigar, while the others positioned themselves behind and to each side of Clary.

Tony was smaller, better dressed, nicer looking than Clary had pictured him. He examined the cigar a minute and then looked up. "Johnny, you disappointed me," he said. "Got anything to say for yourself?"

There was no point in holding back, no point in playing coy or trying to bluff his way out. It wouldn't work, so he found himself for the second time that night repeating the story of the accidents, his loss of memory.

When he finished, Arnie Martine laughed. "Some story," he said. "Some imagination. I always said the guy was smart —

too smart for his own good. I told you you couldn't trust him, too."

"That's the way it was, Johnny?" asked Tony. Clary nodded. Several moments of silence followed, and then Tony said, "Well, we've waited this long, so I guess another day won't matter. We'll check it out in the morning, Johnny."

"Come on, Tony," Arnie said. "You know he's lying so let's get it over with. Even if he isn't, what could you do? You can't just let him walk away, knowing what he does."

"Don't be in such a hurry, Arnie. I told you, we're going to check it out. Lock him up in the empty office and one of you guys stay here tonight." He got up and started for the door, but turned and in a harsher, more commanding voice said, "And leave him alone."

## VI

THE ROOM WAS CHILLY, uncomfortable. He dozed off several times, seated in a chair, but awoke each time with a start. There was nothing to be done — the situation seemed hopeless. No wonder he had sealed the fifteen months off somewhere in the back of his mind. A hired tough, probably even a drug runner and God knows what else. The girl, Lorna, was the only good part. She was special. Different than anyone he had known.

It was mid-morning when he heard her voice. "Johnny. Can you hear me, Johnny?" Soft, muffled. He couldn't pinpoint where it was coming from, thought for a minute he was imagining it. "Johnny, Johnny," again, just above a whisper. It wasn't imagination, it was real and coming from a cold-air register near the floor.

"Yes," he said, crouching in front of it, "I hear you."

"Listen, I've only got a minute. I've got a key, one they've forgotten about. When Tony goes to lunch, one of them will go with him. The other should be up front in the offices. I'll unlock the door and you be ready to go but don't talk, just follow me. My car's outside."

"Then what? Where do you think we can go?"

"We'll worry about that after we get away from here. I have to go now, so you be ready."

It would be crazy, he knew. Okay for him — he had nothing to lose — but too risky for her. They'd be after her as much as they'd be after him. It wasn't fair, not to her. It did offer hope, though, and that's more than he had now. Still he wasn't sure, didn't know what he'd do when she unlocked the door.

He needn't have worried. When the door opened at eleven-thirty it was Arnie. "Come on," he said, "Tony wants to see you." He was angry, and it was more

than the anger he'd feel because of the unexpected punch, the humiliation it caused.

Clary was led back to the plush office. Ange was waiting by the door, but Tony dismissed them both. "Wait up front," he said. "Go do something for a while."

"Tony — " Arnie began but he was cut off by a terse command to "Go!"

When they were alone, Tony said, "Well, Johnny, your story checks. All of it. The hospital in Galveston, the things in Albany before and after you were here, everything."

He had known it would, of course, if anyone took the time to investigate. That wasn't the issue. The important thing was what Tony planned now. Arnie was right; he knew too much. He might not remember it now, but they couldn't be sure of that, and there also was always the chance it would come back to him in the future.

"Okay," Clary said, "where do we go from here?"

Tony unwrapped a cigar, smiled, and said, "That's up to you, Johnny. Want your old job back?"

Clary laughed wryly. "I'm no hood, Tony," he said, "no matter what I did when I was here before."

Tony put his head back, laughed, too. "Don't use such harsh words, Johnny. How about saying businessman? You were a

businessman yourself."

"Not this kind of business, Tony, not your kind. So what happens if I say no?"

"You walk out the door."

"Just like that? No strings attached? What if I remember, what if it comes back to me? What's to keep me from turning you in?"

"You won't," Tony said. "Believe me, I've thought about it, and what's to turn in? It'd be your word against that of a respected businessman. Besides, you don't know much anyway."

"You mean I can get up and walk out now?"

"Right," Tony said, leaning forward and lowering his voice. "But before you do, consider this. I like you, Johnny, I always have. You've got a lot on the ball and I need a number-two man, need one bad. Arnie and Ange are good boys but not the executive type, know what I mean?"

Clary nodded.

"So," Tony continued, "what would you say to fifty thou a year? Plus, if you and Lorna decide to tie the knot, the deed to that nice place I own out past the lake in the country. Call it a little wedding present."

Clary was surprised by the offer. "What would I do for that fifty thou?"

"We'll be starting on a new shopping mall down near Canton when the weather breaks. You'd be kind of an overseer, make sure

everything goes okay. Nothing to it." He paused, smiled and added, "Of course there'll be other things from time to time."

Clary shook his head. "No thanks, that's not for me. So can I leave now? I'm hungry, dirty and tired."

Tony raised his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders. "If that's what you want, Johnny. I told you, it's up to you."

"Thanks for the offer," Clary said, standing up and walking to the door. "See you around, maybe."

Tony nodded, and he walked out.

Lorna, tense, pale, looked at him as he approached her desk. "Ange told me," she said. "I can't believe Tony's just going to let you go like that."

"It surprised me, too," he said, grinning, "But he is. It's lunch time — can you get away?"

She nodded, got up, and walked with him to the door. They drove in his car to the Red Arrow, sat at the same table, ordered sandwiches.

"Well, Johnny —" she began, but he interrupted.

"Mitch, remember?"

She smiled, shook her head. "I guess you'll always be Johnny to me. Anyway, what are you going to do, go back to being a salesman?"

"Manufacturer's representative," he corrected. They sat without speaking for a few min-



utes. He wanted her, wanted her with him. Eighteen hours earlier he hadn't known she existed. Now it seemed like he'd always known her. Maybe he had, in his mind. In his dreams. Now that she had materialized, was alive and real, he didn't want to walk away from her. He wouldn't find her again, he knew that.

"Want to come with me?" he asked abruptly, brusquely.

She looked in his eyes, said, "Do you want me to?"

He nodded.

"What would I do?" she said. "In a strange place and with you traveling so much?"

He hadn't had time to think about that. What would it be like for her? Is a wildflower ever the same after it's uprooted and left alone in alien surroundings? He didn't know. And money, what about that? He was getting by, but he'd want more than that for her. She should have the best, that's all he could visualize for her. Not some small apartment in a strange city, always pinching pennies, alone most of the time. No, she should have the best. That took money. Lots of money. With money you could have the things you wanted, do the things you wanted to do. Nothing else would be satisfactory. Not for her, not in *his* mind.

The door opened, jarring him from his reverie. Tony walked in, flanked by Ange and Arnie. Tony raised his hand a few inches,

wiggled the fingers and winked.

"I never thought they'd let you go," she repeated softly.

"He's not a bad guy."

"I know he isn't, not the way you mean it. No one could be nicer to me. But in the other way; the other part of his business — well, you know —"

She was unaware of Tony's offer. Money, lots of it. A luxurious place to live. Second in command, head man someday. It was tainted money, of course, but that's what she was paid with every Friday. It spends just like the other kind, too. Besides, when you come right down to it, how much of the stuff is lily-white?

He stood up, startling her with the suddenness of the move. She looked up at him, said, "Where are you going?"

"Have to see Tony a minute." He walked to the table where the three men were eating, stooped, and said something to Tony. He got up, and the two of them walked to the end of the bar where they had privacy. They talked quietly a few minutes, shook hands and returned to their tables.

"What was that all about?" she asked. Then, after a pause, adding, "— Mitch."

He looked around, pretending to be puzzled. "Who're you talking to?" he said, starting to grin. "Something wrong with your memory? My name's Johnny — Johnny Ninety."

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# The Long Treason



By Robert Lopresti

Pablo was young, but quick to learn — especially when the subject was survival.

THE OLD MAN HAD LIVED on the hill beyond the village for as long as Pablo could remember. When Pablo was learning to walk, he had seen the foreigner, already old, walking alone through the jungle. Three years before, the old man had stood outside of his shack, watching, when the soldiers came to take off anyone old

enough to carry a gun.

Pablo's brother, Felipe, had been sixteen, and had cried as they led him off to fight some war for El Presidente. He hadn't returned. Pablo's father died two years later, and at the age of twelve Pablo became the man of the family.

To help his mother feed the

younger children, Pablo went to work for the old man. In that South American country it was widely believed that all foreigners were rich, except the missionaries. The old man was a foreigner, but he was neither rich nor religious.

The work was easy: odd jobs and chores, repairs to keep the old shack livable. The old man was too weak to do them himself. He didn't pay Pablo much, but who else in the village could afford to pay him at all, still too young to do a man's work? The job with the old man would keep Pablo's family alive till he grew up.

Pablo was running an errand for the old man when he first heard about the visitor. The visitor was a foreigner who drove up into the hills in a rented car, dressing too warmly, bribing too richly. Most foreigners, especially wealthy ones, would have been robbed and killed on their first night out of the city. However, there was something about this man that made even the hungriest *ladrones* put their knives away and keep their distance.

On his third day in the mountains he reached Pablo's village. That night, while they made stew for the old man's dinner, Pablo told the old man about the stranger who was asking questions. The old man just shrugged and went on cutting carrots.

When the stew was ready, the old man invited the boy to join him, as he often did. He always ac-

cepted, because it meant one less meal his mother had to stretch out of their meager food supply.

Although they ate in silence, neither of them heard the approaching footsteps. Suddenly the door burst open, almost torn off its hinges by a powerful kick. The visitor walked in, holding a pistol.

Pablo had jumped up, ready to run, but the old man touched his shoulder and gestured for him to sit down again. The old man had shown no other reaction to the stranger's sudden entrance.

The visitor spoke a name which Pablo had never heard before. The old man nodded. "So you have found me at last. It's good to see you again. You have grown older."

The visitor glanced quickly around the one-room shack before closing the door and approaching the small table. He was about fifteen years younger than the old man, just leaving middle age. His voice was so gentle that it surprised the boy.

"You have gotten older, too. I can hardly believe that you are still alive." They spoke in their own language, but Pablo had been exposed to many tongues, and could follow most of what they said in that one.

The old man gestured, like a host to a guest. "Sit down and talk for a while."

The visitor's lips compressed into a thin line. "You know why I am here."

The old man shrugged, and for the first time in several minutes he noticed Pablo. "Let the boy go."

The stranger's eyes ran over him, and the boy shivered. "Go where? To tell who?"

"He'll go home to bed, and tell no one. Don't worry, old friend; there's no one here who would rush to my rescue."

The visitor's thin lips turned up in a tiny smile. "That doesn't sound like my old teacher. Do you really care what happens to the boy?"

The old man got angry. "I don't care about him, or anyone else. And no one here cares whether I live or die. I've made sure of that. But why does the boy have to see it?"

The foreigner looked hard at Pablo. "Will you go straight home, and say nothing to anyone?"

Pablo nodded. "All right. Go."

The boy ran out. Once outside, he stopped and looked in all directions. Then he crept around the outside of the shack. At the rear was a spot where the wall was so low that by standing on a barrel he could climb silently onto the roof. He had tried once to do some patching up there for the old man, but the roof was in such bad shape that patchwork was useless.

He crawled up slowly. Some spots were so rotten that he almost fell through. The rain must have poured through the cracks, but the old man never complained

about it. He seldom complained about anything.

Finally he reached the center of the roof. Peering through a crack, he saw both men, directly below him, seated at the table.

Straining, he could hear the old man speaking. "...so many years. I thought that I had been forgotten. I'm almost glad to see you."

"Many others have looked for you. Am I really the first to succeed?"

"Oh, there were others, years ago. I suppose the trail has become colder with time, and it takes someone with your persistence to follow it now."

"Where are those early searchers now? Buried in the jungle beyond the village?"

Pablo saw the old man's face twist into a smile, or perhaps it was just a baring of teeth.

"This is a dangerous part of the world, old friend. Death comes suddenly here."

The visitor gestured with his gun. "I do not intend to die in this hellhole of a country."

"Suit yourself. It's good enough for me. I'm not as particular about things as I once was."

"I have some questions I'd like to ask you."

"Feel free. If you become tedious I'll stop answering, and you'll shoot me. So ask away."

"We know that your new friends lost track of you, and that they are angry with you. Why?"

"After I changed sides I lived

in my new country for three months. I saw nothing but the inside of two bare rooms, and did nothing except tell their top spies about our top spies. After three months I decided it was time to leave."

"Because of the accommodations?"

"Not that. I wanted to leave before they discovered that they had paid me for false information."

The visitor stiffened. "False? You mean you didn't betray us?"

"I changed sides for money, isn't that betrayal enough? I simply chose not to give them the information they wanted, so I had to get away before they found out."

The visitor scratched his head with the hand that didn't hold the gun. "If we could be sure that that was true: that the secrets you held are still secret —"

"It would change a lot of plans, perhaps a national policy or two. Agents you thought were known would be usable. Codes, programs, and operations that were cancelled when I left could be dusted off."

"But —"

"But you can't be sure, can you? I might be lying to you. Once a traitor, always a traitor. I taught you that."

The visitor nodded. "But it would be just like you to sell out and then double-cross the buyers. After you left we tracked down all the little betrayals you made along

the way to the big one. Have you always had a price?"

The old man smiled and said nothing.

"It was very interesting, you know, this hunt for my old teacher. All the time I wondered whether natural causes had already finished you off. Or someone from the other side. You know there are several countries that put a bounty on you, alive or dead."

"Who are you working for, by the way?"

Pablo watched the visitor's face go white. "You know who I work for. Just because you're for sale doesn't mean that everyone is."

"A patriot, are you? You don't sound like a student of mine."

"But I am — they never let me forget that. Do you know what your selling out cost those of us you trained? A black mark on our records forever. Every time our name comes up for assignment or promotion, they remember our teacher and feel a touch of suspicion. When you betrayed your country you betrayed each of us."

"When I had influence you were willing to ride on my coattails. You should know by now that free rides are always expensive in the end."

The visitor was trembling with fury. "It wasn't like that. You know it wasn't."

The old man sat in silence for a moment. "Is this interrogation over yet?"

"One more question. You must have been noticed around here, as a foreigner on the run. How come the beloved Presidente of this country didn't turn you in? It would be just like him."

"The fool thinks that I'm a Nazi. There's a lot of them down here, and they've poured gold into his Swiss bank. So, accidentally, I fall under their protection."

"In that case, why aren't the Israelis hunting you?"

"They were. When they found me I convinced them of the obvious fact that I wasn't a Nazi, and won their silence about who I really was."

"How?"

"I sold them the locations of a few real Nazis."

The visitor shook his head. "You sell them out while their bribes are protecting you. You really are amazing. I think that betrayal is compulsive with you. It comes as naturally to you as breathing."

Pablo had never seen the old man look so ancient. "Breathing isn't as natural as you might think. Sometimes I have to force myself to take the next breath."

"Look at me, teacher. Look at me! Is there one thing which you haven't betrayed?"

The old man struggled to his feet. "I have always been loyal to my own interest."

The visitor's laugh was cracked and angry. Pablo hadn't realized how tense the visitor really was.

"Your own interest? Look at you! Dressed in rags, waiting in the jungle to be hunted down and killed, living in this hole with no one who cares enough about you to bury you when you die. You've done very well for yourself."

The old man leaned against a wall, trying to stand straight. The foreigner got to his feet.

The old man spoke, and his voice was cold and hollow. "Do what you came to do."

"You betrayed us all." The foreigner raised his gun. "Remember that."

As fast as a jungle snake, Pablo turned over and hit the weakest spot on the roof. The wood gave, then cracked, and he fell through with a crash. The wood didn't hit the visitor, but as he darted aside in confusion he lost his balance. As he fell to the ground he fired one shot. When Pablo was able to get up he found the visitor lying unconscious, and the old man bleeding from a bullet hole in his leg.

THE OLD MAN GROANED as Pablo tightened the rags around his leg. The wound had started bleeding again while they were burying the visitor. The body was deep in the jungle with its neck broken, all identification and money taken. When someone came looking for him they would assume that he had been killed by robbers.

Pablo had been surprised at how



easily the old man had recovered once there was a specific job that needed doing. He had tied up his leg, and then killed the unconscious man, showing none of the exhaustion that had weighed him down a few minutes before.

But now that the work was done he lay on his cot in the shack and moaned. "I'm going to die." He tried to sit up, and the effort sent tears down his cheeks.

Pablo pushed him back with a gentle hand on the shoulder. "You will not die, old man."

The old man looked at him, and finally asked the question that had hung between him for hours. "Why did you do all this? You must have heard what he said about me. What makes you think

that I'm worth saving?"

Pablo smiled. "I will take care of you. You will get well."

The old man closed his eyes. For hours he lay there trembling, and Pablo never left his side. At one point, late in the night he began muttering: "Loyalty...a second chance...loyalty."

*Three years, thought Pablo. He must live for three more years. Then I will be sixteen, old enough to be taken by the army, like my brother Felipe. Old enough to be treated like a man. I will go to the city then and sell the old man to the highest bidder, and Mama and the children will never be hungry again.*

"You will not die, old man," he said softly.

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## MURDER AT MARDI GRAS

A new Mike Shayne short novel by BRETT HALLIDAY

Plus stories by Michael Avallone, Edward

D. Hoch, James M. Reason, and others.

## MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY DEBUT

Louise Brownlee has had one article published in *The Vintage Ford Magazine*, and has co-authored with her husband *The Handbook for Montana Peace Officers*. She does testing and evaluation on Search and Seizure for the Montana Law Enforcement Academy twice a year. We are proud to present her first published fiction, which, coincidentally, is about a...

# First Arraignment



By Louise Brownlee

After all, a new judge has to start somewhere, doesn't he?

"I CAN HARDLY WAIT," said County Attorney Kermit Forrester, "to meet the Honorable District Judge Robert Marsh, waxed moustache and all. After all the hell the Governor received for appointing a hippie judge over two perfectly good guys the commission recommended..." He joined his fingers, peered over them. "Am I bothering you?"

Clerk of Court Alice Appleby glanced over the rims of her glasses at Mr. Forrester. They stood, facing each other, over the front

counter of the clerk's office. *Fatuous little idiot*, she thought. "No, of course not," she said.

It seemed to her, from the pictures she had seen in the paper of the new District Judge being sworn in last week by the Chief Justice, that he looked okay. Young. Only thirty-one. Longish blond hair, to be sure, and that wasn't too good. The moustache and little beard — well, they might go in time. Give the boy a chance. After all, she thought, laboriously writing a new probate in the

register, he was a brilliant young attorney, top graduate from Yale. That should mean something. He had cut his teeth on courtroom work as Public Defender and then as prosecutor for the County Attorney in the city.

She glared at County Attorney Forrester. "He was very polite when he called," she said. "When Judge Brand set that arraignment ahead so far because of his vacation he said he'd try to get another judge to drop by and handle it ahead of time. I honestly didn't think he'd bother, but he did call Judge Marsh. It's awfully kind of a new judge to drive fifty miles here to handle it — after all, he's not due for court here for another two months. Besides, I think it'll be nice to meet him. I expect he'll be a nice young man."

Forrester chuckled. "Too bad we can't give him a little excitement for his first arraignment," he said. "Something he'll remember when he's an old toad."

Alice Appleby sniffed disparagingly and went on writing. *Humph*, she thought. *He's one to talk about excitement. Why, that day a defendant went berserk and hurled the water pitcher from the attorney's table right at his head, Forrester fled, squeaking in fear, right into the arms of the ancient sheriff. Excitement, indeed!* In a sleepy little courthouse like this, there never was any excitement.

Then, glancing up, Alice

Appleby saw the new young Judge standing in the doorway. As she suspected, he was like most of the young attorneys who show up for their first big case. You could always tell. Such an earnest look, but nervous.

"Good morning, Your Honor," she said.

He smiled and walked toward them. "Good morning," he said.

*A nice young man*, she thought, shaking hands and introducing herself. The hair too long, the beard and moustache a little silly, but he looked intelligent and honest and she liked him. Forrester had drawn back to study this upstart that the Governor had launched over so many envious heads. Judge Marsh shook hands, and Forrester suddenly beamed.

*He likes him too*, thought Alice Appleby, feeling as though her very own fledgling had flown. Her maternal instincts often rushed to the fore with particular young attorneys, and this young Judge with the excellent background and Yale education was going to be one of her "boys."

"I wasn't sure you'd want to go ahead with the arraignment this morning," Judge Marsh said. "But I had the time, and I knew Judge Brand wanted it taken care of while he was gone on vacation. Is the defense attorney here?"

"He's over in the jail with his client. Your first arraignment?" Forrester seemed fascinated by the young Judge.

"My first. Of course, I've handled many from the other side of the bench, but this is my first as judge. Bound to be different. I understand the young man is being held on a charge of deliberate homicide. It sounds routine."

"Not quite," said Forrester. "His old man owns half the wheat country up north. Tough old customer. Disowned the kid when this happened. Kid's wild, never amounted to much. Has a record — mostly petty stuff, but he's been in and out of the reformatory. Rest of the family's okay. Father hired a local attorney — old duffer. Probably bring in some hotshot for the trial, but for this first pleading a local yokel is okay. The family is cutting the kid off, otherwise. None of them will be here for the trial, and I didn't notify them about the arraignment. We didn't know if Judge Brand would get someone to take it."

"I wasn't sure I could make it," said Judge Marsh, "but my schedule cleared up and I thought it'd be a nice drive. Mrs. Appleby said you attorneys were all available so I drove down. Don't have a court reporter yet, but I brought a tape recorder. I'll have the tape transcribed when I hire my reporter. I'll have to borrow a robe, if Judge Brand has one in this courthouse."

"He does," Alice Appleby said. She suppressed a chuckle. Judge Brand didn't wear his robe except

for jury work, but a new judge usually trotted out the robe for all occasions until he got used to the routine. "It's in chambers. Here's the court file. Justice Court turned thumbs down on bail. He's a strange young fellow, I hear. Has an odd way about him. One of the girls who works in the sheriff's office thinks he's funny in the head."

The young Judge frowned and glanced at Forrester. "Has he been examined by a physician?"

"He was released from the hospital after he wrecked his car in the chase. The sheriff doesn't see any reason to call in a doctor. He's just a weird young kid. We've talked to members of his family on the phone — the father and a brother, when this first happened, before they hired the lawyer. I got the idea the kid's been a bad egg from the start. Real trouble for them."

Judge Marsh glanced at his watch. "Almost ten. Where are judge's chambers? I'll suit up —" He grinned boyishly — "and we'll get this over with."

Forrester led him out of the clerk's office and Alice Appleby called the sheriff. "Judge Marsh is here for the arraignment. Better bring the boy over."

Judge Marsh stuck his head around the corner of the door. "By the way. Your sheriff is quite elderly, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, I suggest, since you and

Mr. Forrester think the defendant is acting strangely, that it might be advisable to have the deputies on duty accompany the sheriff over here from the jail. If that boy does something sudden in the courtroom, we should have the law available to take care of it."

"Yes, Your Honor. Good idea."

JUDGE'S CHAMBERS were on the second floor of the courthouse. The windows were flung open to admit a light May breeze. Purring softly, a power mower somewhere on the large courthouse lawn broke the small town stillness.

Alice Appleby waited outside chambers as Judge Marsh buttoned himself into the black robe. He opened his briefcase and removed a legal pad, pen, and small recorder.

"Come on in here," he invited, reaching for the court file she held. He opened it. "Hmm. I see here by the Information filed — mm...ten days ago — that this young man is accused of holding up an all-night service station at gunpoint and that his companion..." Here the Judge turned the page. "was killed in a shootout with police. Hmm. His own brother. Deliberate homicide under the felony murder rule. Stupid young man in a lot of trouble."

"Right," said Forrester, who had been standing in the courtroom door. "Caught dead to rights. Deputies caught up with him in a high-speed chase. His

brother had caught a police bullet. Dead. Dumb kids. Rich kids, too. No reason. This kid'll never be in more trouble. Judge Brand is a tough bird, and unless the family disqualifies him, that young man is going to spend most of his young life in prison."

"He ought to." The Judge studied the file. "I see the Justice Court denied bond. So this morning we take his plea, and if he pleads guilty, ask for a presentence report for Judge Brand. If he pleads not guilty, set it for trial. Okay. Let's go."

The courtroom was small, furnished in old oak. The windows were open, the morning sun streamed through them. In the back of the courtroom stood three men in sheriff's uniforms and a young, slender man in a dark gold jumpsuit. Jail garb. His hands were cuffed behind him. An older, white-haired man stood beside him.

Mrs. Appleby marched to her desk beside the judge's bench and remained standing. Pride, she thought, goeth before a fall, but it was a heady experience clerking and acting as bailiff to this new Judge on his first arraignment. Sending reports like gunshots resounding through the little courtroom, she pounded her little gavel on the desk.

"District Court of the 8th Judicial District is now in session. The Honorable Judge Robert Marsh presiding. All rise."

She looked around. Nobody was sitting anyway, but she tucked her chin down and smiled in satisfaction. Had to do things right. Judge Marsh walked quietly behind her and stepped up the two small stairs to the raised bench. He sat down, punched a button on the tape recorder, set his legal pad down, and took charge.

"Bring the defendant before the bench," he said.

The sheriff and white-haired man accompanied the young man in the jumpsuit to the bench. Apparently having received word that the Judge wanted them in the courtroom, the deputies stood close behind. The defendant, a slight boy with a thatch of unruly red hair, stared blankly at the wall behind the Judge. His eyes wavered toward the ceiling and his mouth hung loose.

Frowning at the appearance of the defendant, Judge Marsh said, "Counsel, do you have a copy of the charge?"

The white-haired defense lawyer, obviously fascinated by the unconventional young Judge, goggled. "Yes, Your Honor," he answered.

"Is this the defendant's true and correct name and is it spelled correctly?"

"Yes, Your Honor."

Judge Marsh frowned at the slack-jawed youth in front of the bench. The boy stared about him vacantly. "Mrs. Appleby, will you read the charge to the defendant. I

want him to understand it."

Alice Appleby, puffing visibly with importance, stood and read the information from the file aloud. She returned the file to the Judge.

To the defendant, Judge Marsh said: "Young man, do you understand the charges against you?"

The carrot-topped defendant pulled away from the sheriff, who had a hand on his arm. He did not answer.

The frown on Judge Marsh's face deepened. "Counsel, I have some peculiar feelings about this defendant. He doesn't seem to understand what I am saying, and he seems afraid of the officers. I'm not assured in my mind that he knows what is going on, and if we continue we could impair this proceeding in the Supreme Court." The defendant whimpered and drew away from the sheriff. "I would like to see him a moment privately in chambers. He seems frightened. I want to question him briefly without all these people here." The Judge stood up. The attorney and the sheriff looked at each other.

"He's shackled," said the sheriff. "He'll be okay."

The Judge waited by chambers door. "I'll only be a moment," he said, stepping inside, holding the arm of the defendant.

THE INSTANT the door closed the Judge shoved the young man toward the open window. "Get

your butt out on that fire escape! It'll drop with your weight. We don't have long. Move!" The Judge shrugged out of the robe, threw it over the window sill, and boosted the shackled defendant out. The fire escape lowered and the two rushed down the metal stairs. "The car's here behind the lilac hedge. Go! We'll take care of your cuffs later!"

They jumped into the car and drove away slowly, attracting no attention. "I got all the deputies up in the courtroom so we wouldn't run into one of them now."

The defendant sat, wide-eyed, his carrotty thatch sticking out in all directions. "I wondered why you told me on the phone last week to start acting like Old Foggy's kid on the ranch. God, big brother, I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw you up there. Where'd you get the beard? And the blond hair. Yours is red like mine!"

"Bleached it. Beard from an actor's supply. Now shut up and listen. Dad is through with you and so are Dave and I. Through! Because of you Bobby is dead, and he wouldn't have gotten in trouble if it hadn't been for you. Dave and I are getting you out of this — we'll try to get you to Mexico, and it's the last time your big brothers are going out on a limb for you. I didn't know if this'd work, but —" Suddenly he grinned — "it sure did."

"How'd you think of it?"

"Saw the picture of the new Judge in the paper. All young men in beards and moustaches look alike. I didn't have the beard to go with my moustache, and as soon as I dump you on a back road and get back to the city, I'll look like me again. Dave'll pick you up in a cattle truck. The lawyer called and said the arraignment was set several weeks away until Judge Brand got back. I've been in so many courtrooms with you, I know the routine, and just in case I sat in on court last week at home. Wrote down what the judge said, talked to the county attorney a little, and I had my role down pat. From then on it was bluff all the way."

"Can they get you?"

"Don't think so. I'm supposed to be on vacation and I have an alibi set up. I didn't touch anything except the court file and my case and recorder — and I have them here. I put the robe over the window sill so there's no prints there. Anyway, I don't have a criminal record. You do."

"What about the real Judge? Where is he?"

Shrug. "I phoned the county seat this morning before I called Mrs. Appleby to see if she'd buy my story. Judge Marsh is in another small town, like this. Handling probate. He's gonna be surprised when he finds out what a busy day he's had!"



# The Conference Kill

By W.L. Fieldhouse



It was a case of murder by invitation only — and everyone in the secluded mansion was a suspect except for Major Lansing himself.

MAJOR CLIFFORD LANSING entered General Clayton's office, marched to the desk and reported to the stout, white-haired man behind it. Lansing saluted crisply. Clayton smiled slyly as he returned the gesture.

"Please be seated, Major," Clayton said.

"Thank you, sir," Lansing said, folding his long, lean body into an armchair. He tried to conceal his surprise as the General continued to grin contentedly.

"Do you know why I called you in here, Major?" Clayton asked.

"I assumed there was another homicide for me to investigate, sir," Lansing replied.

"Your assumption is incorrect," Clayton said cheerfully. "Have you ever heard of the European

Homicide Investigators' Conference?"

"To be absolutely honest with the General, no," Lansing confessed.

"It's an annual meeting held at the private estate of Jerome Weinberg; formerly one of the finest homicide investigators of the Frankfort Police Department." Clayton leaned back and smiled again. "You've been invited to attend the conference, Major."

"Me?" Lansing blinked with surprise. "But I'm not a European. I'm an American Army officer."

"Yes. You're also the *first* American to be invited to the conference. You've solved a record number of baffling murders in less than a year. As all the

homicides occurred here in Germany, you qualify as an outstanding investigator in Europe. Inspector Weinberg called me this morning to request I grant you a special leave to participate in the meeting."

"And you agreed?"

"I certainly did." Clayton nodded. "Recognition of a CID investigator by such an elite organization is a great honor for you, for the United States Army in Europe, and, frankly, for me personally as commander of the Criminal Investigation Department of USAEUR."

"You want me to go?" Lansing asked.

"It will be an excellent chance to improve relations between the U.S. Army and the Federal Republic of Germany, not to mention the other countries represented at the conference. This meeting is an unofficial United Nations of homicide investigators."

"I certainly hope not," Lansing remarked dryly.

Clayton grinned. "Don't worry, Major. No communist countries will be represented at the conference. Investigators from England, France, Italy and Spain will be present: international masters in your profession."

"I'm not a diplomat, sir."

"No, but you're the best homicide investigator in USAEUR. I'm confident you'll represent

your country in a worthy manner."

Lansing signed. He disliked business meetings designed to resemble social gatherings, but he didn't want to disappoint General Clayton. "When do I leave, sir?" he asked with a weak smile.

"The day after tomorrow." Clayton beamed. "Weinberg is sending train tickets to cover the entire trip. It won't cost the taxpayers one cent. Someone will meet you when you arrive at Frankfort and transport you to his estate." Clayton nodded with satisfaction. "Good luck, Major."

THE RAILWAY SYSTEM in Germany is one of the best in the world. *Der Zug* is fast, efficient and pleasant. Lansing's semi-fluent mastery of the language made the journey across country easy and enjoyable. The German people are generally polite and hospitable, thus the ill-mannered shoving and shouting common to public transportation in many countries was virtually nonexistent.

The train arrived in Frankfort fifteen minutes ahead of schedule. Lansing was an obvious figure, tall and athletically slender, dressed in a uniform raincoat with a duffel bag slung over his shoulder. His service cap, the bill decorated with golden scrambled eggs, covered most of his short brown hair. Only some of the gray at his temples was noticeable. The U.S.

Army Major wasn't difficult to single out from the crowd of *Deutschlander* civilians.

A small, pale-faced man with thinning gray hair and sad blue eyes approached him on the platform. "Major Lansing?" the man asked timidly.

"That's right," the CID investigator replied, offering his hand.

"I am Rudolf Buchheim, Herr Weinberg's valet," the little man explained, taking Lansing's hand in a somewhat cautious manner. "I'm to take you to Herr Weinberg's house for the conference."

The manservant led Lansing from the train station to a Mercedes parked by the curb. The Major resisted the urge to whistle, and silently wondered how a former police inspector could afford such an expensive automobile. Climbing into the Mercedes, Lansing admired the handsomely upholstered interior as Rudolf started the engine.

Twilight had fallen as the valet steered the car off the main highway to drive onto an unpaved dirt road. Soon Lansing saw the house. It was a Gothic-style mansion, not unlike the medieval castles that had become a tourist attraction in Central Germany.

"Herr Weinberg must like his privacy," Lansing remarked.

"Privacy?" the servant asked, puzzled. "Oh, *ja!* Yes, he lives here away from everyone else.

He doesn't like the outside world much. Herr Weinberg seldom reads newspapers or watches television. The day before yesterday was the first time he'd left his estate in over a month. He had to use a telephone in Frankfurt. There is no phone in his house."

"We all have our idiosyncrasies," Lansing mused. "The others have already arrived?"

"*Ja.*" Rudolf nodded. "Er — yes."

"Well, I speak some German and a little Vietnamese," Lansing said, "but I may have trouble talking with members of the conference whose native tongue is derived from Latin."

"Everyone speaks English, mein Herr. Language barriers will not be a problem here."

Rudolf stopped the car in front of the iron gates bisecting a brick wall surrounding the mansion. Lansing gazed up at the dark, shadow-shrouded building as Rudolf got out to open the gate. Long, fingerlike shadows, cast by moonlight through tree limbs, streaked the sloping slate roof, and loose wooden shutters banged against the house as the strong spring wind swayed them on unoiled hinges. Lansing chided himself for feeling an involuntary chill run up his spine. It was, after all, just a house. A house owned by a respectable homicide investigator like himself.

*Yeah, Lansing thought, but why does he have to live in a place that*

*resembles the set of a Vincent Price movie?*

Driving to the front porch, Lansing and Rudolf mounted the stairs and entered the house. Lansing was almost surprised that the door hinges didn't creak.

They stood in a spartanly furnished hallway with a tile floor and hideous wallpaper with strangely depicted flower arrangements that somehow resembled faces with empty eyesockets and open mouths. A long, wide staircase with a black banister extended to the next floor.

"The other guests are in the den, Major," the manservant explained, indicating a pair of panelled doors at one end of the corridor. "I have to put the car away. You may introduce yourself if you like."

Lansing thanked him and walked to the doors. He heard muffled voices as he reached forward to slide one of them open. The conversation ceased as he appeared at the threshold. A small chandelier hung from the ceiling of the den, illuminating the bookshelves and furniture. Dull red drapes covered a wide window, and an unlit fireplace gaped back at him. The pendulum of an enormous grandfather clock clicked back and forth like a giant metronome. Four sets of eyes turned toward him silently.

A large, wide-shouldered man wearing a pinstripe suit with a matching vest rose from a large,

ill-treated sofa. His reclining hairline was contrasted by long sideburns of dense brown hair. The gold chain of a pocket watch was stretched across his portly stomach. He removed a curved brier pipe as a thin, insincere smile flickered across his narrow lips.

Kneeling by the fireplace, trying to start a blaze, was another man. He rose to reveal that he was slightly more than five and a half feet tall. He was dressed in a trenchcoat two sizes too large for his waspy frame. His jet black hair was cut in an almost military style. Eyebrows raised into twin peaks as long nose, wide mouth and saucerlike eyes seemed to adopt an expression of subtle curiosity. His lean face hardly seemed large enough to hold all his oversized features.

Another man stood by a small bar with a glass of amber liquid in one gloved hand and a cigarette in the other. He was nearly as large as the man in the three-piece suit, but his bulk appeared to be mostly muscle and a naturally big-boned structure. A heavy plaid raincoat added to his hulking appearance. His upper lip was all but concealed by a Stalin-style moustache.

The most interesting person (in Lansing's opinion), however, remained seated. A strikingly attractive blonde looked up at him with cool green eyes. A half smile played at her wide, full mouth as

she drew gently on a cigarette attached to a long, thin holder. She wore an overcoat draped over her shoulders like a cape. A tight turtleneck sweater and equally close-fitting slacks accented the fullness of bustline and the curves of her torso and long legs.

"You must be the American chap," the man in the pinstripe suit said. "I'm Inspector Edward Charles Bradworth, Scotland Yard."

"Clifford Lansing, CID," the Major replied as he lowered his duffel bag to the floor.

"Frightfully good to meet you," the Englishman said as he pulled off a black cowhide glove and held his hand out. "Beastly weather for this time of year, what?"

"It's chillier in here than it is outside," Lansing remarked as he shook hands.

Bradworth squeezed hard, his teeth clenching as he applied pressure. Lansing wondered what the hell the Englishman was trying to prove by such a bone-crushing handshake. He was about to grind a knuckle into the back of Bradworth's hand, but the Briton released him.

"Where in the states are you from, Major?" the Englishman asked as he moved, surprisingly nimbly for a man of such bulk, to the sofa.

"A town called Lottsville in Michigan. It's near Detroit, where I was a police detective before I enlisted."

"Were you ever in New York?" Bradworth asked, his tone suggesting he considered Lansing's birthplace unimportant. "I was there in the early fifties, you know. I used to be a promising middleweight contender." Bradworth smiled around the stem of his pipe. "Almost fought in the Olympics."

"Ah! At last, I have the fire started," the waspy man in the trenchcoat announced. Turning to Lansing, he said, "I am Henri Gudare of the Paris Police." He pulled a hand from his pocket, accidentally dropping a black leather glove. It fell to the floor with a *thump*. Henri retrieved the glove swiftly, stuffed it into his trenchcoat, and offered his hand to Lansing. "A pleasure, *monsieur*."

"*Scusi*," the man with the handlebar moustache said as he tugged off a black driver's glove and advanced. "I'm Inspector Mario Tiratti from the *Venezia Polizia*." He shook hands with Lansing. The major noticed a thick layer of calluses on the knuckles of Mario's first and second finger.

"We were discussing methods of dealing with crime," the big Italian explained, almost spilling his drink as he gestured with each word. "I'm interested in your opinion about this subject."

"There's no single answer to crime," Lansing said.

"*Si*, but I think what we need is

to make searches and arrests without having to spend so much time getting warrants and that sort of thing."

"Combatting crime is important. It's our job," Lansing remarked thoughtfully. "But people's rights are important, too. I think we generally know where criminals are in time to get a warrant. Most other incidents fall into the category of 'hot pursuit'."

"Have you always gotten a warrant before searching a suspect's property?" Mario asked.

"No," Lansing admitted, "but I never said I haven't done anything wrong in my life. Besides, I'm a CID investigator. The Uniform Code of Military Justice allows for somewhat unorthodox search procedures. As a civilian cop, however, I never violated the constitutional rights of a citizen."

"Rights!" Bradworth chuckled. "You yanks are quite vocal about rights. That's part of America's problem. You allow common citizens the right to own firearms. It's no wonder you chaps have such a bloody awful crime rate." He glanced at the blonde. "Pardon my language."

"America's crime rate isn't really that high," Lansing replied. "Besides, the areas with the strictest gun control laws also have the most homicides and violent crime."

"Well, that's because you don't have them on a national level,"

Bradworth said. "Now in England —"

"Proportionally, considering the size of each country and its overall population, England's crime rate is as high as that of the United States," Lansing told him. "There has also been a rapid increase of firearm-related crime in Great Britain. Your men at Scotland Yard are carrying guns more frequently. If anti-gun laws work, how could this increase occur? Such legislation only disarms honest citizens. Criminals, Inspector, wouldn't be criminals if they obeyed the law."

Bradworth puffed on his pipe hard as Henri coughed, waving his hand to clear the gray smoke from his face. The Englishman's hands balled into fists, then opened repeatedly as he glared at the American. Henri slipped off his trenchcoat as he spoke.

"I think the biggest problem we face concerning crime prevention is manpower," the Frenchman said. "None of our countries have enough law enforcement officers to deal with the escalation of international crime."

"I'm inclined to believe we should be more concerned with *quality* than *quantity*," Lansing said. "There are too many people wearing badges who don't have any qualifications for the job. They aren't properly trained, their temperament is wrong for their profession or their attitude is less than outstanding."

"What an opinionated man you are, Major," the blonde commented with a slight nod of approval. "Oh, I have not introduced myself. I am Isabella Garcia, a police detective from the Madrid Homicide Department."

"Don't you have anything to contribute to this discussion, my dear?" Bradworth asked.

"I've been enjoying the entertainment," she replied mockingly.

"And I am not *your dear*!"

"You are not *anyone's dear*," a voice announced as a door slid open. "But you are correct. Major Lansing is quite opinionated and this conversation has been quite amusing."

They turned to see a husky, bearlike man with a completely bald skull and a great, hawkish Semitic nose. He puffed on a thick brown cigar that smelled like a burning horse blanket. He was dressed, appropriately, in a burgundy-red smoking jacket.

"The Major's remarks about *quality* must have offended the rest of you," the man said, "since he, unlike you four, has no reason to be ashamed of his conduct as an investigator."

An angry muttering of voices responded to this statement. The man entered the room with a shuffling gait that suggested he was older than his lineless face implied. Lansing noticed a slight twinkle in the man's dark eyes. Upsetting his guests obviously pleased him.

"Herr Weinberg?" Lansing inquired.

"Of course." The bald head nodded.

"You have a strange manner of starting a conference, sir," the American said.

"Clever observation, Major." Weinberg smiled.

"I assume this isn't really a conference?" Lansing said.

"Very good!" Weinberg chuckled. "You are quick, Major!"

"Well, would you please explain *why* we're here?" Lansing asked.

"Would you consider these individuals to be the best investigators their countries have to offer?" Weinberg laughed. "Of course, not! They are, however, vain enough to believe my invitation to this meeting was for that very reason."

"What is the meaning of this . . . this charade?" Mario demanded.

"That should be obvious." Weinberg smiled. "You are insults to your profession and to the nations you represent. However, one of you is even worse than the others. That person is a murderer!"

"What is this nonsense?" Isabella snapped.

"Yes," Bradworth said. "See here, Weinberg, we didn't come all this way to be part of some bloody game!"

"I am an old man," Weinberg



replied simply. "I am a Jew. When the Nazis came to power, I left the police force and fled to Switzerland. I later joined the resistance movement to help rid my country of its tyrants. Most of my family died in Auschwitz. I inherited this house and a small fortune after the war, but I returned to active duty as a homicide investigator, forsaking much of the wealth due me. I have a right to this *game*, as you call it."

"What exactly is your game?" Lansing asked quietly.

"I'm sorry, Major. When I said they were 'insults to their profession and their nations,' I did not mean to include you," Weinberg explained. "I am giving three unworthy low-caliber investigators an opportunity to redeem themselves by successfully tracking down a killer. Namely: the fourth investigator."

"Why was I invited to this . . . contest?" Lansing asked.

"Because I don't care to be living in my own house with a murderer and three assorted cutthroats without having some sort of ally besides poor little Rudolf. I also wanted to test the best homicide investigator in Germany. To my surprise, I discovered that you had solved more murder cases this year than anyone belonging to any German police department."

"What if even I fail?" Lansing asked dryly.

"Then I'll unmask the killer

myself — three days from today."

"This is absurd!" Henri Gudare exclaimed.

"I agree." Lansing sighed. "You should give any evidence, if indeed you *have* any evidence, to the authorities."

"I'm disappointed in you, Major." Weinberg frowned. "Of course I have evidence. As for turning my case over to the authorities: I intend to do so. First, however, I want the killer to worry, to . . . sweat, as you might say. You see, I want revenge. What punishment could be more fitting than to turn the tables on a murderous investigator? The hunter is now the hunted!"

"Why do you want this revenge?" Lansing asked, shaking his head.

"Because the killer murdered my daughter, Elisa Boldt. After her husband died in a car accident, Elisa became an investigative reporter for *Der Frankfurt Tagezeitung*, a popular newspaper. She traveled throughout Europe, writing about sordid and often dangerous activities of the continent and Great Britain."

Bradworth cleared his throat sourly.

"She discovered the killer's corrupt pastimes. However, she realized she might be stopped from going to the . . . local police, so she mailed copies of her photographs and information about this person to me."

"Why didn't she go to the police before she even developed her film?" Henri asked.

"Because she had to be certain the negatives would have incriminating evidence that would hold up in court," Weinberg explained. "After all, the person was a member, *is a member* of the police department in the very city she was in at the time. Her proof had to be solid. Also, remember, she was a reporter. Her story was as important to her as catching a criminal. I suppose she thought if the killer confronted her she could destroy the negatives and pretend to abandon the whole business. Elisa thought she could talk her way out of anything."

"Assuming your story is accurate," Lansing said, "why didn't *you* contact the authorities after your daughter's death?"

"Two reasons, Major," Weinberg said. "First, I didn't know the killer's name. All I had was a couple of photographs and the city where the villain operates. Second, I wanted to handle this myself to be certain the murderer didn't evade justice through use of a clever lawyer or some kind of political pull thanks to his friends on the force."

"I refuse to be part of such utter —" Bradworth started.

"Rudolf will see you to your rooms," Weinberg interrupted as he turned to leave. "Good night."

## II

AS LANSING STOOD in the bedroom he'd been assigned to, he considered the situation he'd unwittingly become involved in. It was clearly the most bizarre episode of his twenty-year career as a criminal investigator. He started to unpack his belongings from the duffel bag, but realized he needn't bother. The others were correct. Being part of Weinberg's "game" would be asinine. He decided to confront Weinberg in the morning, demand to leave the mansion, and terminate his involvement in the childish contest Weinberg had conceived.

As he hung up his tunic jacket, the ribbons tacked to its breast glittered under the overhead light. He sat on the edge of his bed to untie his shoes, and noticed a small slip of paper on the pillow. Picking it up, he read: *The killer has a violent past.*

"Brilliant," he muttered sarcastically. "How could a murderer *not* have a violent past?"

Lansing was about to throw the paper away, but decided to put it in the pocket of his poplin shirt. He prepared to untie his shoes once more, but a cry for help interrupted him.

The Major bolted from his bed, pulled open the door and ran into the hallway. Hearing the cry repeated, he followed it downstairs.

Lansing nearly tripped in the darkness as he hurried into the corridor. A figure plunged toward him from the shadows, startling Lansing. The CID investigator automatically assumed a defensive *T-Dachi* stance, nearly striking out at the unexpected movement.

"*Helfen!* Help!" Rudolf's voice gasped.

"What is it?" Lansing asked.

"I found him," the valet explained weakly. "In the office . . ."

Lansing gazed at a patch of light poking through a half-open door. He approached slowly, uncertain of what might be waiting inside the room. Swinging the door open, Lansing entered a large office. Bookshelves and maps covered the walls, and two straight-backed chairs were positioned in front of a massive walnut desk. Jerome Weinberg lay on the floor behind the desk. Drawing closer, Lansing saw that his face has been smashed into a blood-drenched pulp. The CID investigator knelt by Jerome, placing two fingers on his wrist, although he didn't expect to find a pulse.

He wasn't surprised.

THE OTHERS SOON descended the stairs to the ground floor. Someone turned on the hall light. Lansing helped Rudolf into the den as he European investigators demanded to know what

had happened. He poured the valet a glass of brandy, ignoring the others. He noticed a black-and-blue bruise with split angry skin in the center of the valet's forehead.

"Somebody get an ice-pack." Lansing said.

"What's going on?" Bradworth asked.

"Get this man an ice-pack and I'll tell you," the Major snapped.

"No, I'm all right," Rudolf assured him as he sat in an arm-chair and sipped his drink before speaking again. "I saw the light in Herr Weinberg's office, so I went to the door to ask if he wanted anything before I went to bed. I was about to knock as I heard moaning and sounds, like something hitting flesh. I opened the door to see a man with a ski-mask over his face. He was kneeling over Herr Weinberg, hitting him with his fists."

"Is Weinberg all right?" Mario asked.

"He's dead," Lansing said flatly. "What else happened, Rudolf?"

"I must have gasped or cried out, because the man whirled and saw me. He grabbed something from the desk and threw it at me . . . hit me. I must have been knocked unconscious because I don't remember anything else until the Major found me in the corridor."

"You knew about Weinberg?"

Isabella asked Lansing. She wore a long orange housecoat and carried a large tan purse slung over her shoulder.

"Yes. I'll take you all to the office in a moment," the CID investigator replied.

"Why don't some of us check the office while the rest of us question the servant?" Bradworth asked.

"Because I don't trust you people," Lansing said. "We'll go together." Turning to Rudolf, he asked, "Anything else?"

"The killer wore gray slacks, a dark blue raincoat, and black gloves. I recognized the clothing. It belonged to Herr Weinberg."

"Could you tell now tall the killer was?" Lansing asked.

"No, Major. He was still crouching when he hit me..."

"All right, Rudolf. Relax," Lansing urged. Turning to the others, he said, "I'll take you to the office now."

Leading the Europeans through the hallway, Lansing guided them to the office. Mario bent and picked up a heavy plexiglass paperweight shaped like a globe of the world.

"This must be what the killer threw at Rudolf," he said. "Notice the bloodstains?"

"And you just pick it up!" Bradworth snapped. "You bloody fool! There may have been fingerprints on it!"

"If Inspector Tiratti's prints are on it," Isabella commented

dryly, "he can now explain them, eh?"

"What! You would accuse me?" Mario roared.

"Stop this!" Henri put in. "The valet said the killer wore gloves."

Lansing ignored them as he quickly entered the office, moved to the desk and stepped over Weinberg's body. As the Europeans stared at the battered, bloody corpse, Lansing began pulling open desk drawers.

"What are you looking for?" Isabella asked.

"Possibly the photographs," Lansing replied. "Maybe the killer didn't have time to get them, or Weinberg may have had some extra copies."

He whistled softly as he opened the right-hand drawer and extracted a Heckler & Koch nine-millimeter autoloading pistol. Pressing the catch, he removed the magazine and checked it. The clip was fully loaded.

"Good heavens, man!" Bradworth exclaimed. "Be careful with that thing!"

"Guns don't hurt anyone unless somebody pulls the trigger," Lansing told him, jerking back the slide of the blue-black H&K pistol. A cartridge popped out of the chamber. "Even you should know that."

"Ah! This is interesting," Henri said as he placed a large manila envelope on the desk. It had been roughly torn open.

"I found it next to the body."

"Empty," Mario announced, peering into the envelope.

"The photographs must have been in there," Bradworth said.

"Unless our American friend wants us to wait for some kind of warrant," Mario said, "I suggest we search everybody's room. Maybe we'll find those pictures."

"Or the clothing and ski-mask Rudolf mentioned," Isabella added.

"Any objections, Lansing?" Bradworth asked.

"Not at all." The Major shrugged. "Just put everything back the way you found it if you search my room."

Lansing stuck the pistol in his belt as he moved to the corpse. The Englishman cleared his throat and glared at Lansing. "What do you think you're doing with that gun?"

"I'm damn sure not leaving it lying around with a murderer among the house-guests," Lansing said flatly as he knelt beside Weinberg's lifeless form.

"We could disassemble it and give parts to every investigator," Mario suggested.

"You could go to hell, too," Lansing muttered. "I'm keeping the gun."

Both Mario and Bradworth stared at the American with undisguised anger. Lansing ignored them as he inspected the corpse's pockets. He found two cigars, a gold-plated lighter, a

penknife and a fat wallet containing a driver's license, some money and a few postage stamps.

"What did you expect to find?" Henri asked dryly.

"I don't know." Lansing shrugged as he produced the slip of paper from his pocket. "Maybe something like this."

He placed it on the desk. The others read the note with fascination. Mario asked, "Did you find that in your room?"

Lansing nodded.

"Thought so." The Italian extracted a similar piece of paper from his bathrobe. "I found this in my room."

He handed it to Lansing. The CID investigator read it aloud. "A badge hides the killer's crimes."

"I have one of those, too," Isabella announced, opening her bulky handbag.

"*Oui*. I have a similar paper in my room," Henri said. "I will get it."

The Frenchman left the office and headed for the stairs as Isabella unfolded her slip of paper and read it to the others. "The killer is paid by criminal friends. Does this clue mean anything to any of you?"

Bradworth fumbled with his pipe, stuffing tobacco into its bowl as he remarked, "Well, I found a note like those things up in my room too, of course."

"Then why don't you get yours like Gudare?" Mario inquired.

"Well, I . . . I threw it away," the Englishman said. "After all, we all considered this whole business to be utter nonsense." He glanced at the corpse. "Until now, of course."

"Did you flush it down the toilet?" Isabella asked mockingly.

"No, I threw it out the window."

"None of the rest of us threw our notes away," Mario commented.

"What's that supposed to mean?" the Englishman demanded.

"Do you recall what was written on the note?" Lansing asked.

"Of course. It said something about 'The killer's crime travels beyond his country.' Something like that."

"Sounds familiar. Doesn't it, Inspector Tiratti?" Isabella asked coyly.

"Shut up, you trollop!" Mario snapped.

Lansing stepped between them. "Let's avoid name-calling and save our accusations until we know who the murderer is."

"I see everyone is still happy," Henri said as he entered the office. "Here is the paper."

Lansing took the note and read it. "The killer's breath is foul from tobacco."

Bradworth nearly dropped his pipe as he tried to light it.

"Indeed you are upset." Henri said quietly. "That stinking

pipe of yours is enough to offend a swine. And a former prize-fighter's past is most violent too, eh?"

"You're not going to put the blame on me, you little frog bastard!" Bradworth snarled, balling his fists as he approached Henri.

Before Lansing could attempt to restrain the Englishman, Henri acted. The Frenchman's leg shot out, the tip of his polished shoe crashing into Bradworth's groin with punishing force. The big Englishman fell to his knees with a retching gasp.

"That's enough," Lansing said sternly. "And I mean enough from *all* of you."

"Self-defense, Major." Henri shrugged.

"What was that? *Savate*?" Lansing asked, indicating the rasping Bradworth.

"I see you have heard of *La Boxe Francaise*," Henri smiled.

"French foot-fighting."

"Yeah," Lansing said dryly as he helped Bradworth into a chair. "It can be rather violent, too."

"Perhaps," the Frenchman admitted. "But Weinberg was not kicked to death, was he?"

"Gudare has a point," Mario observed. "Bradworth would be the most apt to use his fists on Weinberg. He used to be a boxer and he has a bad temper."

"All of you have poor self-control, in my opinion," Lansing said. "And prizefighters aren't

the only men with lethal hands." He stared directly at Tiratti.

"What is that supposed to mean?" the Italian demanded.

"I noticed the calluses on your knuckles," Lansing said. "I recognize the result of continued *makiwara* training. The use of a striking board in the practice of karate."

The Englishman rose unsteadily, glaring at Henri angrily. "I . . . I should kill you for that."

"You'd better keep your mouth closed," Lansing warned. "Every time you open it something stupid comes out."

"Why don't we search upstairs for any evidence to the killer's identity?" Isabella suggested.

"You folks go ahead," Lansing said, "That is, if you can resist going for each other's throats long enough."

"What about you?" Mario asked.

"I'm going to talk to Rudolf," Lansing replied. "Perhaps he remembers something of interest concerning Herr Weinberg's mail."

### III

MAJOR LANSING MET the others as he ascended the stairs. The European investigators told him that they had found a raincoat, trousers and ski mask fitting the description of the garments worn by the killer. The clothes were in a partly filled bathtub at the end of the hall.

"Did you check inside the mask for a manufacturer's tag?" Lansing asked. "If we knew where it was made, it might help us decide who the killer is."

"We checked," Henri assured him. "There was nothing."

"Did your conversation with the valet prove helpful?" Bradworth inquired.

"Not really," Lansing admitted. "I asked him if he recalled any large envelopes arriving in the mail for Weinberg. Envelopes Elisa Boldt might have sent to her father while in another country."

"What did he say?" Isabella asked.

"He said such mail arrived often," Lansing sighed. "He remembered such envelopes arriving from Italy, Spain, Great Britain, France, Wales and a couple Iron Curtain countries. Weinberg's daughter did more than her share of traveling."

"That was all he said?" Mario asked.

"Yes," Lansing nodded. "He's still dazed and weak from that blow on his head. He's gone to bed. Perhaps after a few hours' sleep he'll feel up to driving to Frankfurt and reporting this incident to the police."

"The police!" Bradworth exclaimed. "Why do we need the police? We're all professional homicide investigators. We should be able to solve this ourselves."

"None of us has any jurisdiction



here," Lansing told him. "We're witnesses and suspects, that's all."

"Well, I don't think I'll be getting any sleep now," Mario remarked. "I think I'll get dressed."

"Good idea," the Englishman agreed.

The investigators began to move to their rooms. Lansing decided to see how much the others had rummaged through his belongings and change into a fresh shirt. Entering his room, he drew the H&K pistol and placed it on the bed as he selected a poplin shirt from his duffel bag. A soft knock drew his attention to the door.

"Who is it?" he asked, shoving the gun under a pillow.

"Isabella. May I come in?" the female investigator's voice said.

"All right."

She entered the room, smiling as she closed the door. Walking to the bed, she placed her purse on the mattress and slowly slipped off her housecoat. She wore a short babydoll nightgown of black lace that displayed her long shapely legs. A low neckline also offered a provocative view of cleavage. Lansing tried not to stare as she sat down on the edge of the bed.

"What can I do for you, Miss Garcia?" he asked, somewhat nervously.

"I want to work with you, Clifford," she stated, crossing her tapered legs slowly. "I think that

together we can find the killer."

"Didn't you hear me in the hallway?"

"Yes. But I don't believe it. You want to catch the murderer." She wet her wide lips slowly. "And I know who the killer is."

"Oh?"

"It's Inspector Mario Tiratti, of course."

"What makes you so certain?"

"His uncle is a *capo*. His grandfather is a Mafia don. Little Mario's career began by breaking legs for the Black Hand in Sicily. Anyone who failed to pay — I think you call them 'loan sharks' in America — Mario would punish them." She sneered viciously. "He probably still devotes himself to the Tiratti Family first and law enforcement second."

"Are you sure about this?" Lansing asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Spain is close enough to Italy to have reason to keep close watch of the Mafia activities throughout Europe," she said. "I'm sure."

"So you think Elisa Boldt uncovered some kind of Mafia business involving Tiratti. This led to her death and all the events that brought us to this spooky old house."

"Mario would certainly be capable of beating Weinberg to death. So why don't you bring that pistol and we'll confront him together?"

"Because you're still a murder suspect."

"Me?" Isabella laughed. "You heard what Rudolf said. Do you think I could be mistaken as a man even in a poorly lit room?"

"A bulky raincoat and baggy trousers could hide even your . . . uh . . . curves," Lansing said. "And the ski mask could conceal your hair as well as your face."

"Oh, Clifford!" She shook her head with amusement. "How could I have beaten a big, hulking man like Weinberg to death with these fists?" She balled up her slim hands.

"Your purse seems a bit heavy. What have you got in it?"

"You don't miss much, Major." She sighed, opening the handbag to extract a black leather sap.

"What do you carry a blackjack for?" he asked.

"A woman needs some sort of protection. Bringing guns into the country is illegal."

"You wouldn't happen to have a pair of gloves in there, too, by any chance?"

"Germany is much colder than the climate I'm accustomed to." Reluctantly, she produced a pair of black felt gloves.

"I'm not accusing you of anything," Lansing assured her. "But you could have used that sap with those gloves, and Rudolf may not have noticed the weapon, thus, he would believe the killer used only his (and I use the word figuratively) fists."

"Then you don't trust me." She

sighed as she rose from the bed, pulling on her housecoat. "And I don't suppose you'd like to spend a little more time with me . . . alone?"

"Not until I'm certain you didn't bash in an old man's skull," Lansing said, regret flavoring his words. She was a lovely woman.

"Pity." She shrugged, gathering up her purse as she marched to the door. Looking back at him, she smiled, "Maybe we'll talk again . . . later."

She left, closing the door softly.

LANSING EMERGED from his room wearing a fresh poplin shirt and his uniform jacket. The H&K pistol at the small of his back made a slight bulge as he buttoned the tunic together. As he walked through the hallway to the stairs, he heard a voice call his name. Turning, he saw Henri Gudare hurrying to meet him.

"I want to talk to you about the killer, Major," the Frenchman said.

"A popular subject."

"I think we really should lock him up or post a guard on him, or something."

"Don't we have to know who the killer is first?"

"There is no question, my friend." Henri shrugged. "Bradworth is our man."

"Okay." Lansing sighed. "How did you figure that?"

"Everything. The method the

killer employed, Bradworth's temper, the fact that he is the only one of us who did not have a slip of paper. You don't really believe he threw such a thing away?"

"I almost did," Lansing admitted.

"But you did not," Henri insisted, gesturing with a thrusting index finger as he spoke. "It seems unlikely Weinberg would leave a clue in the killer's room, does it not?"

"I don't claim to understand anything about how Herr Weinberg's mind worked," Lansing said, considering the whole affair to be absolutely bizarre.

"What probably happened was that Bradworth discovered the rest of us received notes, so he made up the story. My department in Paris has worked with Scotland Yard on many occasions. I have heard of Bradworth before. He has gotten into trouble for mistreating his suspects. I imagine such a brute could be employed by British gangsters. Weinberg's daughter may have discovered this and tried to expose him."

"That's a lot of maybes, Inspector."

"But do you not agree that we should watch Bradworth and Tiratti closely? *One* of them must be the murderer."

"Oh? Why do you say that?"

"Come now, Major." Henri frowned. "The García woman certainly could not have beaten

Weinberg to death. I could have taken him if I used my *savate*, but I am not strong enough to kill such a large man with only my hands."

"But you could have used something to reinforce your fist," Lansing said. "You're probably faster than Weinberg was. If you used a sap, a set of knuckle-dusters, a *yawara* or a judo stick, you could have done it."

"You are a suspicious man, Major." The Frenchman grinned. "You consider all possibilities, no matter how unlikely." He shrugged. "Well, you keep an eye on everyone and I will watch the killer."

Henri turned to walk down the corridor back to his room.

#### IV

DESCENDING THE STAIRS, Lansing heard someone in the den. Following the sound, he found Mario Tiratti standing by the bookcase, inspecting the shelves and rapidly leafing through books before returning them.

"Do you plan to read yourself to sleep, Inspector?" Lansing asked.

"I was acting on a hunch," Mario replied. "I thought since Weinberg left those notes on our beds that maybe he left some other clues."

"Any luck?"

Mario shook his head. "What have you been doing?"

"Listening to some of your

fellow investigators accuse each other of murder."

"Has Isabella Garcia told you who she suspects?"

"No comment."

"That means yes?"

"That means no comment."

Mario grunted with displeasure, "How old do you think she is?"

"Twenty-eight, thirty perhaps."

"She's thirty-three," Mario said, "and she's been associated with the Spanish police since she was nineteen."

"I'm sure you'll get to the point eventually," Lansing said.

"Isabella Garcia worked for Franco's Fascist regime. She helped the dictator's government blackmail political enemies into cooperating with Franco's demands. She is a sexy woman. She uses her beauty as a weapon. Do you understand?"

"I think so," Lansing nodded, recalling Isabella's conduct in his room.

"She's probably got more than one man's blood on her hands already."

"Are you accusing her?"

"I'm saying she is not as helpless as she might appear."

"I believe that," Lansing agreed. "Tell me, is the Mafia still active in Italy?"

Mario's eyes bulged with surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Are you familiar with the Mafia, Inspector?"

"What kind of accusation are

you making, Lansing?"

"None," Lansing assured him. "I'm just trying to find out why Weinberg despised *all* of you." He turned to leave. "Maybe then I could figure out which of you killed him."

Moving into the corridor, Lansing noticed that the light inside the office was on. Drawing closer, he saw Inspector Bradworth searching through Weinberg's desk. Knocking softly on the door frame, Lansing announced his arrival.

"Oh, Lansing!" the Englishman exclaimed, looking up from the desk.

"Looking for clues, Inspector?" the CID man asked.

"Yes," Bradworth replied, hauling his heavy body from behind the desk. "Not that I don't trust your ability to search this desk, but one never knows what may have been overlooked."

"I'm not easily offended, Inspector," Lansing assured him.

"Of course, you might think I'm trying to find any evidence Weinberg left in order to destroy it. I am, after all, a likely suspect."

"Everybody is," Lansing said, "Except me."

"Including Henri Gudare?"

"Is he your favorite suspect?"

"Hasn't it occurred to you that he seems a bit too eager to put the blame on me? He is, after all, a Paris policeman. Quite a few of them have connections with the

Corsican syndicate."

"Crooked cops are found everywhere, Inspector."

"Tell me, Major — did you know Gudare was a member of the French Foreign Legion for some time before joining the Paris police force? A former mercenary would certainly have a 'violent past,' eh?"

"So would a bobby who works over suspects."

"Another nasty rumor about me?" The Englishman's eyebrows met as he frowned. "Gudare's slander, I assume?"

"Stories are flying in all directions tonight."

"There's one theory I doubt any of the others have considered," Bradworth declared smugly.

"Well, don't leave me in suspense."

"All right." Bradworth cleared his throat with annoyance. "Have you thought about the fifth suspect?"

"What motive would I have, Inspector?" Lansing grinned.

"Not you, Major," Bradworth replied. "I'm talking about Rudolf. How do we know he's telling the truth? He could have made up the entire business about witnessing the killing. Rudolf may have planted the clothing in the bathroom, murdered his employer, and then waited for someone to respond to his call for help. He told his fabricated story and allowed us to start blaming each other."

"Did he also pretend to have a bruise on his forehead?"

"That could be self-inflicted."

"I don't think so." Lansing shook his head. "That's a pretty deep gash. He could have suffered serious brain damage from such a blow. That's rather extreme just to throw us off his track."

"Perhaps he struck himself harder than he intended," Bradworth suggested. "Or he may not be injured at all. A clever makeup job could explain his wound."

"What motive would *he* have?"

"You met Weinberg. The man was an absolute bastard. I'm certain he didn't treat his hired help any better than his guests," the Englishman answered, filling his pipe as he spoke.

"Why would he wait until the house was full of professional homicide investigators to waste his boss?"

"To supply an adequate number of suspects, of course," Bradworth replied, lighting his pipe. "Rudolf may be a very cunning and bold fellow, indeed!"

"They say anything is possible, Inspector." Lansing shrugged as he turned to leave the office.

"Major?" the Briton called. "I suggest we make certain the valet doesn't drive into Frankfort alone tomorrow. Just in case. Don't you agree?"

"I don't think that will be necessary," Lansing told him.

"I think we'll know who the killer is before dawn."

## V

HENRI GUDARE WAS once again clad in his trenchcoat as he descended the stairs, his hands buried in his pockets as he whistled cheerfully. Lansing sat in a patch of shadows in the corridor. Rising from the straight-backed chair, he moved forward slowly and quietly on the balls of his feet.

"Going somewhere, Inspector?" Lansing called as he unbuttoned his jacket.

"Oh! Major!" Henri exclaimed with a start. "I . . . I was just about to step outside and search for the slip of paper Bradworth claims to have thrown out the window." Pulling a gloved hand from a pocket, he raised a metal flashlight. "See?"

"I don't think you should go out there," Lansing said.

"Oh? And why not?"

"Because you're a murderer, Henri," Lansing replied, drawing the H&K pistol and thumbing off the safety.

"Me?" the Frenchman's saucerlike eyes swelled even larger in their sockets. "What proof have you for this accusation?"

"I've got plenty. Raise your hands. I don't want to shoot you, but I will if I have to."

"I'm sure." Henri nodded, lifting his arms over head. "Tell me, how did you select me?"

"Weinberg had this pistol, fully loaded with a nine-millimeter shell in the chamber, in his desk drawer. There was no struggle, so the killer must have confronted Weinberg. Why didn't he get the gun? There's only one possible reason. Weinberg didn't think the killer was any threat to him. This obviously meant he didn't believe the killer was armed or a physical match for himself. Bradworth and Mario are younger, stronger and accomplished brawlers. Weinberg would not be so careless with either man."

Wouldn't Isabella be even less menacing than I?"

"True." Lansing nodded. "However, when Weinberg told about his reason for this 'game,' he carefully avoided any clues as to the killer's identity. He only slipped once, by saying 'his' while discussing his daughter's murder."

"That's hardly enough evidence, Lansing," Henri said, twisting the flashlight in his raised hand.

"Not in itself," Lansing admitted. "Luckily, you supplied me with all the proof I need. We all presented a note, a clue left by our host."

"Oui!" the Frenchman exclaimed, "And I had one, too!"

"No, Henri. You said it yourself; Weinberg wouldn't have given a clue to the killer. When you saw the rest of us had notes

you claimed to have one too, and dashed up to your room and wrote one that would not only sound genuine, but exclude you from the suspects."

"How can you be so sure, Major?"

"Your note said: *The killer's breath is foul from tobacco.*"

"Exactly. I am the only one of the group who does not smoke!"

"That's what I mean," Lansing replied. "Weinberg smoked big, thick cigars that smelled like charred manure. He wouldn't mention the killer's tobacco breath. That's the type of remark a non-smoker would make. A non-smoker like you. Besides, your clue was too direct. Weinberg wanted to tease us with the information he supplied. He didn't want anyone to find you too soon, as that would have ruined his pleasure of watching you sweat."

"I suppose you think I used brass-knuckles or something?"

"You're wearing your weapon. I remembered that when we were introduced, one of your gloves fell to the floor. It made a very loud sound, too loud to be merely cloth. Lead shot is sewn under the leather. I understand the French police have used *sap gloves* for some time. The cops in the states are beginning to use them, too."

"Do you really think you can make this charge stick, Lansing?"

"A handwriting expert should be able to determine if your note

is a phony, and a chemical analysis will find traces of blood on your gloves no matter how well you washed them after your grisly deed was complete. Until then, I don't want you going outside. You might do something foolish — like attempting to hot-wire the Mercedes."

"Whatever you say, Major!" Henri replied, throwing the flashlight at Lansing.

The inflection of the Frenchman's voice had warned Lansing. He ducked and the flashlight sailed harmlessly overhead. Henri Gudare leaped forward. Lansing could have shot him, but he hesitated because Henri was not armed. The Frenchman's foot lashed out, smashing into Lansing's wrist, sending the H&K pistol flying from numb fingers.

Intense pain shot up through the nerve endings of his arm. His left hand automatically seized his right wrist. Lansing felt misplaced bone under the skin. The Frenchman had broken his wrist.

As Henri's fist swung at his face, Lansing realized the Frenchman was armed. He dodged the sap-gloved fist, then leaped back to avoid another *savate* kick. The American felt the chair at the back of his knees as Henri closed in confidently.

Reaching back with his good hand, Lansing swung the chair around to block a deadly right cross. The lead-reinforced punch struck wood, shattering part of



the chair back and ripping the furniture from Lansing's grasp. Reacting swiftly, the Major swung the side of his hand into Henri's mouth like an axe, the *shuto* stroke smashing the Frenchman's upper lip and teeth.

Henri staggered but didn't fall. He launched a kick and a one-two combination with his lethally gloved fists. Lansing's foot stopped Henri's kick, the edge of his shoe slamming hard into the Frenchman's shin. The American ducked under Henri's left fist and blocked the other punch with his forearm. Henri's mid-section was wide open. Lansing drove the front of his right elbow into his opponent's solar plexus.

The Frenchman gasped as his wind was knocked from his body. Lansing seized Henri's wrist in a *katate-dori* Aikido grip, then stepped behind his opponent, back to back, as he raised the captured arm high. Bending rapidly, Lansing sent the Frenchman hurtling over his buttocks to crash forcibly to the floor. Henri lay stunned as the Major picked up the pistol.

"Good Heavens!" Bradworth exclaimed as he and the other investigators appeared on the stairwell. "What happened?"

"Inspector Gudare and I had a disagreement about Weinberg's killer," Lansing replied through clenched teeth as his injured wrist began to hurt worse. "He

thought we should let him go."

ISABELLA GARCIA set a splint on Lansing's wrist as the CID investigator explained what had happened. Mario handcuffed Henri's arms behind his back and threatened to shoot the Frenchman in both knees if he caused any trouble. Bradworth handed Lansing a cup of tea as he lit his pipe.

"You see, I told you it was Gudare," the Englishman boasted.

Lansing remembered that Bradworth had also suspected Rudolf, but he nodded in weary agreement.

"What happened to the evidence Weinberg had about Gudare and his daughter's death?" Isabella asked, bandaging the Major's wrist.

"Henri Gudare burned it and flushed it down the toilet," Lansing replied. "Rudolf thinks Weinberg may have had copies put in his safe deposit box at a bank in Frankfurt. Henri was probably involved with the *Union de Corse* drug trade." He glanced at Bradworth. "As you suspected. Maybe they'll put all the pieces together at the trial. At any rate, we have our killer."

"Didn't your General give you three days leave?" Isabella asked, smiling broadly.

"Yes." Lansing grinned. "That will give us some time to talk, won't it?"

# Only a Ticket



by PAT HILTON

Anybody who crossed Brock Jamesworth was going to pay for it — whether it was a cute chick, or a cop!

“YOU BETTER LISTEN, and you better listen good.”

The laughter that punctuated Brock Jamesworth's John Wayne was friendly and affectionate, a familiar reminder that the evening was wearing on and a great deal of alcohol had been consumed.

Not by Brock, however. He was on call at Broadway Hospital, where he was a staff surgeon. The affection of Brock's friends for him was enduring albeit cautious. Most of the Friday night group had grown up together, their friendships reaching as far back as grade school. Even then Brock's anger had lain just below the surface, and once they had seen his dark fury unleashed, they tended to be careful, to walk gently, not to accidentally disturb the charm and unleash the ugly, unnecessary anger.

Since Sharon, his wife of a decade, had left him a year earlier, his temper seemed even closer to

the surface, more easily disturbed, more vehement in its expression.

Tonight he was with Ruthanne Marshall, the most recent in the string of young women who hoped to follow in Sharon's footsteps. Ruthanne worked for the news department of a local television station. She had gone in to have a mole removed from her shoulder and remained to date the deft surgeon. She was bubbling with excitement tonight, having learned that day that she was being permitted some on-air reporting spots. She had been issued a new tape recorder, the latest in electronic marvels, which was activated by the sound of a voice, thus eliminating one more step in human intervention and responsibility. She had brought the recorder ostensibly to demonstrate its technological capability and secretly to share her excitement and pride. It had been a focus of attention all evening.

Brock's friends liked Ruthanne.

She was bright and spunky, and they understood while quietly pitying her open adoration of Brock. She was so without guile in her innocent desire to share his life that they were troubled by a faint uneasiness around her, as if Brock's invulnerability was their guilt. "She's good people," they said generously to one another, her warmth provoking a response far more enthusiastic than the usual polite tolerance they had felt toward the stewardesses and starlets who had preceded her.

"You're going to have to learn to gallop off into the sunset, Ruthanne," someone joked.

Ruthanne put down the tape recorder and rose to her full five-foot height. "Watch this," she said and strutted before them, an instant Bette Middler. She pranced back and forth across the living room, her butt out and her knees high, cooing and cursing. After a first surprised moment, her audience — Brock's audience — rewarded her with laughter, then genuine applause and appreciation.

Brock alone did not smile. He turned away from her performance and walked to the bar, where he poured a glass of mineral water.

Ruthanne finished with a flourish to the clapping and laughing of Brock's friends, the enthusiasm muted in direct proportion to proximity to Brock. Laughing happily, flushed with pleasure, Ruthanne headed for Brock, who

turned away as she approached.

"You two make quite a team," said George Roberts, their host, who joined them, happily into his fifth martini and oblivious to Brock's displeasure. "It's too bad vaudeville is dead. You two could go on the road when medicine is in a slow season. Hey, doc, how about a medicine show with Ruthanne to pull them in?"

"Yeah, Bette here would like that," Brock said sourly, turning finally toward Ruthanne, who was standing uncertainly behind him. He did not look at her. "Talent is as talent does — and Ruthanne certainly does." He laughed harshly. "And you do, don't you, my dear?" He winked broadly.

"Brock . . ." Confused, Ruthanne touched his shoulder.

"Yes? What is it? Oh, you're through? No more star trips tonight?"

"Brock, I didn't mean —"

"Get your things, order your limo—let's be off."

"Brock..." Ruthanne tried again, but Brock was already rapidly disposing of good-byes and heading out the door. A short silence followed their departure. George spoke first. "I believe we've just seen the last of Ruthanne."

SAM MCDONALD had chosen to come to Escobar's in spite of the challenge posed him by the generous spirit of the owner, Mr. Morales. Although many of Sam's

peers had a propensity for ferretting out those places whose owners did not present checks to L.A.'s protectors, Escobar's was not a gathering place for LAPD motorcycle cops. Whether they were uncomfortable with too much solicitous service or just uneasy with the ethnic ambience, Sam, who eschewed freebies, neither knew nor cared. Tonight he wanted to be alone, and at Escobar's he had a fair chance of not running into uniformed colleagues, conspicuous in their boots and uniforms. He sat drinking the strong, black coffee, replaying the private conversation the watch commander had had with him that night before Sam left the station.

"Donaldson," Captain Masters said severely, covering his fondness for the young officer, "your report shows a very low ticket rate the last few months."

"Don't tell me you believe that story about quotas, Captain?"

Captain Masters refused to be amused. "Not funny, Donaldson. We may not have official quotas, but we do know what we can expect from an officer in the way of tickets. You're way under. One low month — it can happen to the best of us. But when it keeps happening — well, there's something wrong. You just aren't taking care of business. I'm not talking about giving tickets to people who don't deserve them. That's not what I mean. I'm talking about giving tickets to those you do see,

those who flagrantly break the law. Any asshole civilian sees more traffic violations in a day of commuting than you give tickets in a month of Sundays."

As Masters scolded on, reminding Sam of upcoming examinations for promotion, Sam tried to look respectful, but he was anxious to escape from the station house to the freedom of his motorcycle. Now as Friday faded to Saturday at Escobar's, Sam worried about how much to tip. Too much and it looked as if he was trying to pay for his coffee, thus insulting the proud Mr. Morales. Too little and the waitress was cheated because of Mr. Morales' kindness.

In the meantime the evening was rapidly passing and he had given no citations. He had truly tried. But the woman who had cut so sharply into another lane without signaling had been young and pregnant. Tears had filled her eyes when he approached the clean, shabby, ten-year old car, and he could not do it. And the old man who had not come to a complete stop at the boulevard sign — Sam thought of the slimness of a social security check and the dent a moving violation would make in it. Sam gritted his teeth. Surely there was some blatant lawbreaker out there, driving an expensive car, who could afford a ticket.

Except for his traffic citation record, Sam was considered a good cop, one deserving a pro-

motion. From the beginning he had done well, first at the Academy and then on duty. His reports were prompt and thorough; he was rarely faulted for not following procedures. It was only where tickets were concerned, where he had to look a relatively innocent fellow human being in the eye and deal with anger or frustration or fear on a personal plane with someone who was not a crook, someone whose crime had no victim, that Sam fell down on the job.

THE GUEST COMEDIAN on Johnny Carson was pretty good, pretty damn good, Mr. Allister decided. He applauded along with the studio audience as the young man finished his routine.

"Not bad, young fella, not bad. When you can make me smile twice and laugh out loud once, you're not bad."

Mr. Allister rose and shuffled to the kitchen of his tiny house, jerking to a sudden stop at an unfamiliar sound — a whumph, different from the noises made by the cars above. When the freeway had first been built so close to his house, the speeding cars had bothered him, and he thought he might have to move from the house where he had lived with his wife, now dead, since he had retired. He no longer noticed the sounds; they were part of his life, and he would awaken from sleep if the freeway had remained too long

silent. The whumph was different; he was unable to guess its origin, or even if it were real or fancied. He did not hear it again immediately, and he walked on to fix his tea in troubled silence. Whumph. There it was again. Something outside. Trembling, Mr. Allister returned to the ancient brown desk in the corner of the living room. He fumbled in a lower drawer until he found the small gun. He examined it to make sure it was loaded.

Then he called the police.

RUTHANNE AND BROCK rode in unpleasant silence, the Cadillac racing with urgency along the freeway like an angry bulldog. Ruthanne finally spoke. "Brock, what is it? What's wrong?"

"Nothing, Ruthanne, nothing at all. I enjoy seeing my date make a fool out of herself and therefore by association out of me."

"A fool! What are you talking about? I don't understand you. It was just fun. I thought — well, you always do John Wayne, and I thought it would be fun if I learned to mimic to surprise you. I've been practicing forever. I wanted to surprise you — I thought you'd like it — I thought..."

"Ruthanne, if you don't understand what you did, then I can't explain it to you. At this moment I have no interest in even trying. But do get this: nobody, nobody, makes a fool of Dr. Brock Jamesworthy —" Brock broke off, his

voice changing. "What the hell?"

Brock cursed vehemently when he saw the red light flashing persistently in his rear-view mirror.

SAM HAD BEEN almost ready to give up in his quest for an erring motorist and face a displeased Captain Masters when the Caddy flashed up the freeway, the driver apparently oblivious to Sam's motorcycle in the second lane.

Sam surged forward, falling in behind the tan-and-gold car. He clocked the car at 68. Damn. Why couldn't the driver have been going 80, leaving him no choice? He didn't want a borderline ticket. Sighing, he pulled behind the big car and turned on his red light. When the driver pulled over sharply and stopped, Sam parked his motorcycle, took out his ticket book, and walked carefully to the driver's side.

"Sorry, officer." The driver's smile was stiffly broad, an attempt at politeness. "Did I get a little over the limit?"

"May I see your license, please?" Despite the driver's forced smile, Sam sensed distracting tension in the car. The pretty young woman in the passenger's seat was looking down, fumbling with something on her lap. Sam saw her locate a tissue, which she used to dab her eyes and wipe her nose, her inner drama upstaging the one beside her.

"Oh, come now, officer, I

wasn't going that fast."

"Sixty-eight. You were going 68." Sam was annoyed with himself. He did not want to defend his decision, to argue with this angry stranger. "Your license, please."

"It couldn't have been that fast." Brock's voice rose a note higher, and he fought for control, trying to keep his voice light, sensing the slender cop's uneasiness.

"Please, mister —"

"Doctor," Brock interrupted automatically, reaching for his license, his lips tight. "Goddamn-it, nobody drives at 55. How come you're picking on me?" He watched with disbelief as Sam began to write, aware that the ticket was irrevocable, the policeman immune to pressure, once pen touched paper.

"I want your name and badge number, officer," Brock said stiffly as Sam held out the ticket for him to sign.

Sam gave Brock the requested information and watched as Brock wrote it carefully in the address book he pulled from his pocket. "Excuse me, officer. I'd like to get out of the car a minute."

Sam was alert, watching Brock for signs of unexpected movement, but Brock was slow and deliberate, as if he too were wary, having heard tales of jittery cops who had lost too many peers in what were initially only traffic violations. When Brock stood outside the car, he and Sam were

almost the same height, but Sam felt a physical shock when Brock looked directly into his eyes. The hatred from the doctor's eyes was startling in its intensity. What could be the matter with the man? It was, for god's sake, only a ticket. The money couldn't mean that much to a doctor. Sam was silent, waiting. Brock finished his visual examination. "I don't like my rights violated," he said, his voice as icy as his eyes.

Brock got back in the car, addressing Ruthanne loudly enough for Sam to hear. "That guy better hope he never ends up in my hospital under my knife."

Sam watched the car pull away. "The hope is mutual, doc," he muttered aloud as he walked back to his motorcycle, his relief at having actually given a ticket tarnished by the unpleasant encounter. He replaced the ticket book and stood a moment looking over the embankment of the freeway at the tiny old houses squatted below, and he wondered again if the people who lived there ever got used to the sounds of the freeway. He was turning to get on his cycle when his eyes were caught by a darkened car, a police car, turning onto one of the streets below. He watched as the car stopped and two policemen got out and walked several doors down the street. It was like watching television with the sound off, and Sam was faintly amused as they stopped and conferred a moment.

One of them slipped around to the rear of a house and out of Sam's sight. The other waited a few seconds before cautiously approaching the front door, his gun drawn.

The policeman came to a sudden stop. Sam strained forward, puzzled, but could hear nothing. He decided to ride down and see what was going on, since both cops were out of the car and could not be reached by radio.

THE PERSON who had answered Mr. Allister's call told him a police car would be by soon. In the meantime, she continued, Mr. Allister should stay inside the house and not open the door to anyone else. She asked if he understood. Mr. Allister said that he did.

He hung up the telephone and went back to his big flowered chair, sitting and listening quietly with the gun on his lap when he heard the sound again. This time he was sure it came from the front of the house. Where were the police? He looked at his faithful old Bulova watch and realized it had been only five minutes since he had called. It would probably be at least fifteen minutes more before they got there. He had heard terrible stories about incidents in which it had taken the police up to forty minutes to respond to a call. That was long enough for an old man to get beaten up and robbed and tied up — like poor old Mrs. Roberts, 88



years old, had been last month. She lived only three blocks away. And there had been other stories of muggings and burglaries in the neighborhood.

Damned if he was going to sit still and let a bunch of kids get to him without a fight. That's why he had kept that old gun in the first place. It had belonged to his father and had been lying in a trunk with some other memorabilia Mr. Allister had salvaged from his father's belongings. When the freeway came through and the neighborhood started to grow old, Mr. Allister had dug out the little gun. He took it to a gun shop, where they cleaned it and told him where he could go to learn to shoot. Mr. Allister had enjoyed the shooting lessons, and he was vaguely sorry he had not learned to handle a gun sooner. He thought he might have enjoyed hunting when he was younger.

Holding the gun carefully, he went to the front door and opened it quietly. He didn't see anyone, so he slipped out and stood looking around. Whumph! Mr. Allister jumped fearfully and scurried behind the bushes that lined the front of the house. The bushes did not cover his feet, but Mr. Allister hoped that if he stood very still, the prowler or intruders wouldn't notice. And he had the gun for protection, just in case.

It was very still for a few moments until Mr. Allister heard soft, slow footsteps coming to-

wards him. He tried not to breathe; the gun shook in his hand. The sounds stopped. A rough voice said something that Mr. Allister did not quite catch, but the next words were clear. "If you're in there, come out with your hands in sight."

Mr. Allister did not move, and the order was repeated. Mr. Allister thought he noticed a tremor in the speaker's voice. He plunged forward, his finger on the trigger, too late realizing his suspected assailant wore the uniform of a police officer. The young officer understood instantly that a harmless old man was about to kill him and, in an act that remarkably combined self-preservation and charity, dove at Mr. Allister's legs. The frail old man fell heavily to the ground, his body crushing the bushes as he fell. Even though stunned, Mr. Allister realized that a palm branch that had fallen into the bushes had caused a whumphing sound as it brushed against the house when stirred by a breeze. The officer's gun tumbled unnoticed to the ground, the bullet struck a freeway sign and ricocheted off, entering the back of Officer Sam Donaldson, who was just mounting his motorcycle.

"I'LL GET HIM. I don't know how, but I will." Brock had yelled as he drove away from the scene of the ticket, even angrier now that he felt compelled to keep the

speedometer at fifty-five. The drive to Ruthanne's building was punctuated only by curses called down on all policemen and on Sam Donaldson in particular, descriptions of persons who had died under the careless knife of a surgeon, descriptions of persons who had died when a surgeon failed to act. Ruthanne listened in horrified silence until the car stopped in front of her building.

"Are you coming up?"

Brock stared at her. "Are you crazy? I could no more make love or even sleep in the same bed with some dame after all this. God, what a lousy night."

"It was only a ticket —" Ruthanne recognized the futility of her words. "What will — when will I see you?"

Brock was too angry to make the farewell speech he usually made when he was tired of one of his ladies. "A kiss-off with the medical touch," he would boast.

"You still don't get the picture, do you?" he said to Ruthanne. "We're through. Kaput. Cops don't give me tickets for nothing; broads don't make an ass out of me at parties. Through. Over and out, Ruthanne. I don't intend to see your pretty little mug again."

Ruthanne's composure vanished, and her enraged voice pierced Brock's ears. "What do you mean, never? I love — loved you. You said you loved me. I thought we would get —"

"Love, my dear child, love is a

word men use when they want to get laid."

Ruthanne froze, and her tears stopped. She gathered her purse and recorder and coat and got out of the car with as much dignity as she could muster. Brock started to open his door. "I'll walk you up," he said.

"Oh, no, you don't. Let's not pretend for even a minute that you are any sort of a gentleman." She slammed the door as hard as she could. Brock drove away, not waiting to watch her get inside the door. She thought he was probably hoping a prowler would rob her, rape her, preferably murder her. She did not know she had already been dismissed. Any lingering thought would have been lost in the compelling sound of Brock's beeper.

SAM DONALDSON was prepared for surgery within an hour after the accident. Although he could not hear them, voices were murmuring reassuring words to him, the strongest, most anxious voice belonging to Captain Masters, who had driven with flashing lights and siren to Broadway hospital as soon as the radio report came in. "Don't worry — don't worry," he said over and over. "We've got the best for you, Sam. We'll take good care of you, Sam. We've called your folks. Don't worry, Sam. It'll be okay."

"What are his chances?" he asked the surgeon anxiously. The

doctor looked at the watch commander steadily with unfriendly eyes.

RUTHANNE'S DREAMS were haunted by Brock, Brock growling at her that she'd better listen and better try not to be funny. Brock smashing a ball across the tennis court with the power of a javelin thrower. Brock standing over the operating table as she lay conscious and helpless and bleeding, murmuring, "Nobody makes a fool of me."

She awoke, exhausted, drained, dreading the empty day that stretched ahead. She was surprised, relieved, to discover that she felt more angry than hurt. She stretched her arms, her eye catching the tape recorder lying on the bedside table. She frowned, reaching for it. She rewound the tape, listening to its quiet sound, as it returned life to the evening before. *Silly girl — a little masochist in you*, she scolded. She listened again to Brock doing John Wayne to the appreciative laughter of his friends. A few flicks and the recorder took her through her own performance. Ruthanne flushed. She gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling.

*I'll get even with that creep. I don't know how, but he'll get his.* She addressed the waterspot on the ceiling. *Damn it, I'm starting to sound just like him*, she thought.

*"May I see your license, please?"*

She jumped when she heard the policeman's voice at her bedside.

*"That guy better hope he never ends up in my hospital under my knife."* She listened again to Brock's angry raving and to his final dismissal.

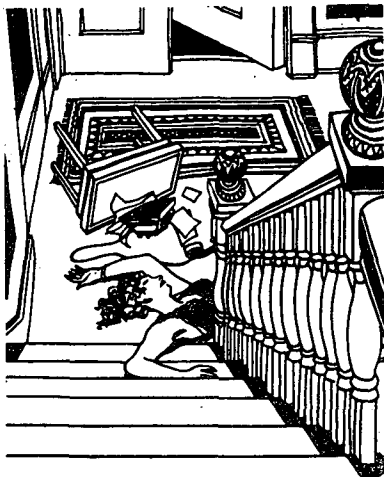
She lay for a while after the recorder stopped. Time for coffee, she thought. She turned on the radio to her own station, slipped on a robe, and was almost out of the bedroom door when she stopped, caught by an item on the news broadcast.

"Los Angeles police officer Sam Donaldson was shot in a freak accident last night on the Santa Monica Freeway. The shot was fired by Peter Allister, who mistook another police officer for a prowler, accidentally wounding a policeman who was not involved directly in the shooting incident. Donaldson was rushed to Broadway Hospital, where he died a short time later on the operating table."

Ruthanne raced to the phone. The hospital confirmed that a Dr. Brock Jamesworthy had performed the surgery. Ruthanne smiled with satisfaction as she rewound the tape recorder until she found what she was looking for: *"That guy better hope he never ends up in my hospital under my knife."*

"This is Ruthanne Marshall," she said to the voice that answered her call. "I'd like to report a murder."

# Stiff Competition



By John Ball

ONE OF THE CORNERSTONES of mystery literature is happily back in print, thanks to International Polygonics, Ltd., a somewhat unlikely name for a publisher, but a publisher none the less. *The Man in the Corner* by Baroness Orczy is a collection of memorable short stories about the little man who sat in a corner and solved mysteries while he tied and untied complicated knots in a piece of string. This new quality paperback is a facsimile of the 1909 edition with a new introduction by Burke N. Hare. The text is clear and readable. An essential book for every collection. (\$4.00.)

Also from International Polygonics is *Murder From the East* by Carroll John Daly, the man who more than any other launched the private eye story in the celebrated *Black Mask* magazine. Race Williams, his detective, is rough, tough, hard-boiled and given to violence. Readers of Mickey Spillane will find a strong resemblance to Mike Hammer. This is a facsimile of the 1935 edition, and a good one. Lots of blood and action by the man who outranked Gardner and Hammett in the popularity polls of the time. (\$4.00.)

☆☆☆

One more nostalgic item is

*Norgil the Magician* by Maxwell Grant, who owes much of his fame to having created the Shadow and to the fact that he is in reality the much esteemed Walter B. Gibson.

Norgil was a pulp era hero who used his remarkable conjuring abilities to solve crimes. He was also a notable athlete, a skilled boxer, a quick sketch artist, and a considerable hand with the ladies. Some of his best cases have been assembled for the first time by The Mysterious Press in an attractive hardcover volume with a new introduction by Mr. Gibson. (\$10.00, or twice that for the limited, signed edition.)

☆☆☆

Returning to the present, one of the most delightful mysteries to appear in years is *A Morbid Taste For Bones* by Ellis Peters (Edith Pargeter). It is a medieval whodunit of rare quality and introduces Benedictine Brother Cadfael, a superb new detective. Despite the setting in times long gone, the people live and breathe on every page and there is a heroine who every man will adore. The story is excellent, the crime horrifying, and the solution nothing less than brilliant. Whatever you do, don't miss this one. (Morrow, \$8.95.)

☆☆☆

Two Grand Masters are back with new books and both are in their usual form. George Bagby writes again of Inspector Schmidt, the only detective on record who

prefers to solve his crimes barefoot. In *Guaranteed to Fade* we meet someone close to the late Tommy Manville whose ex-wives have formed a club called *The Veterans of Domestic Wars*. When the man in all their lives is done in, there are obvious complications. (Doubleday Crime Club, \$7.95.)

Hugh Pentecost offers another adventure of public relations man Julian Quist in *Deadly Trap*. There is a very good portrait of an extremely wealthy oil tycoon and his attitude toward his position of great power. The story is a good one despite the fact that Mr. Pentecost slides for home at the end leaving some unanswered questions in the reader's mind. Apart from this reservation, a welcome entertainment. (Dodd Mead, \$6.95.)

☆☆☆

Tony Kenrick offers *The Night-time Guy*, a semi-espionage story in which a volunteer subject agrees for a fee to test some new and highly secret eye drops which are said to give remarkable night vision. Some very determined people try to penetrate the secret, but the tension is diminished somewhat by the style of writing, which is early pulp, and the fact that the people involved seldom emerge into reality. (Morrow, \$8.95.)

☆☆☆

Another medical suspense story is *Spore 7* by Clancy Carlisle. This is a well-done and well-

written book which suffers from the fact that it perhaps too closely resembles *The Andromeda Strain*. When a mysterious disease attacks people in Mendicino, California, they become covered with slime and go mad. The story is sometimes quite powerful until the author pulls out one too many stops at the end in a search for an overpowering climax. We will watch for his next with interest. (Morrow, \$9.95.)

☆☆☆

A light entertainment is *My Brother, the Druggist* by Marvin Kaye. It is fun, but sometimes confusing because of the liberal use of Yiddish expressions not known to the general public. Nicely plotted and fairly clued, it is frothy enough at times to resemble drowning in alphabet soup. All about a youngster who goes to a magic convention while his elders go to a meeting of jazz record buffs in Washington. When the boy disappears, problems arise, well seasoned with ethnic humor. (Crime Club, \$7.95.)

☆☆☆

*Fire in the Barley* by Frank Parrish is a unique book and a very good one. The "detective" is a rural oaf in England who is a poacher, thief, seducer, and all-around cheat who does it for his mother. He is a completely different form of detective who, in his brief interludes of integrity, doubles as a handyman. The mystery isn't very deep as a small

group tries the old protection racket on the farmers whose crops are destroyed if they don't pay. Our Dan Mallett runs them to earth in his own dishonest way. Very well-written and first rate. (Dodd Mead, \$7.95.)

☆☆☆

Bantam Books is issuing a new series about Sam Briscoe, an ex-reporter with no visible means of support who plays private eye. He is half Irish, half Jewish and speaks Yiddish, which gives him an advantage in *The Deadly Piece*. Lovers of violent action will enjoy Briscoe's investigation into the activities of jewel dealers in New York and Puerto Rico. Some suspension of disbelief is called for, particularly since gold doesn't burn and neither do gemstones, but the key gem item described is intriguing. (\$2.25 in paperback.)

☆☆☆

*Watch Out Behind You* department. While you still can, be sure to get a copy of *The Fan* by Bob Randall, otherwise you'll miss a masterpiece. Written in the very difficult "documents" style, this is a chilling tale of genuine terror that builds, and builds, and builds. It is so expertly written it is virtually flawless. An aging actress has a fervent admirer who starts out innocently enough, but then . . . You can thank Random House for publishing it. (\$7.95.) Long after you have read this remarkable book it will stick in your mind.

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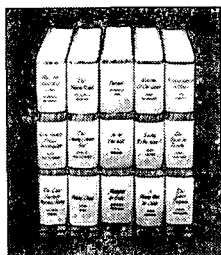
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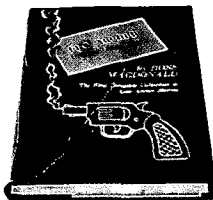
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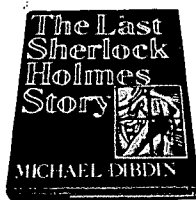
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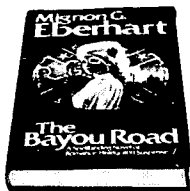
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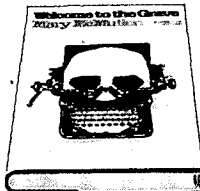
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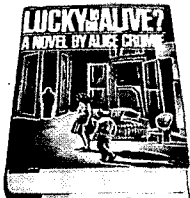
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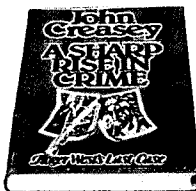
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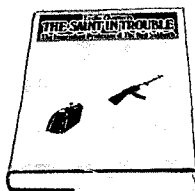
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